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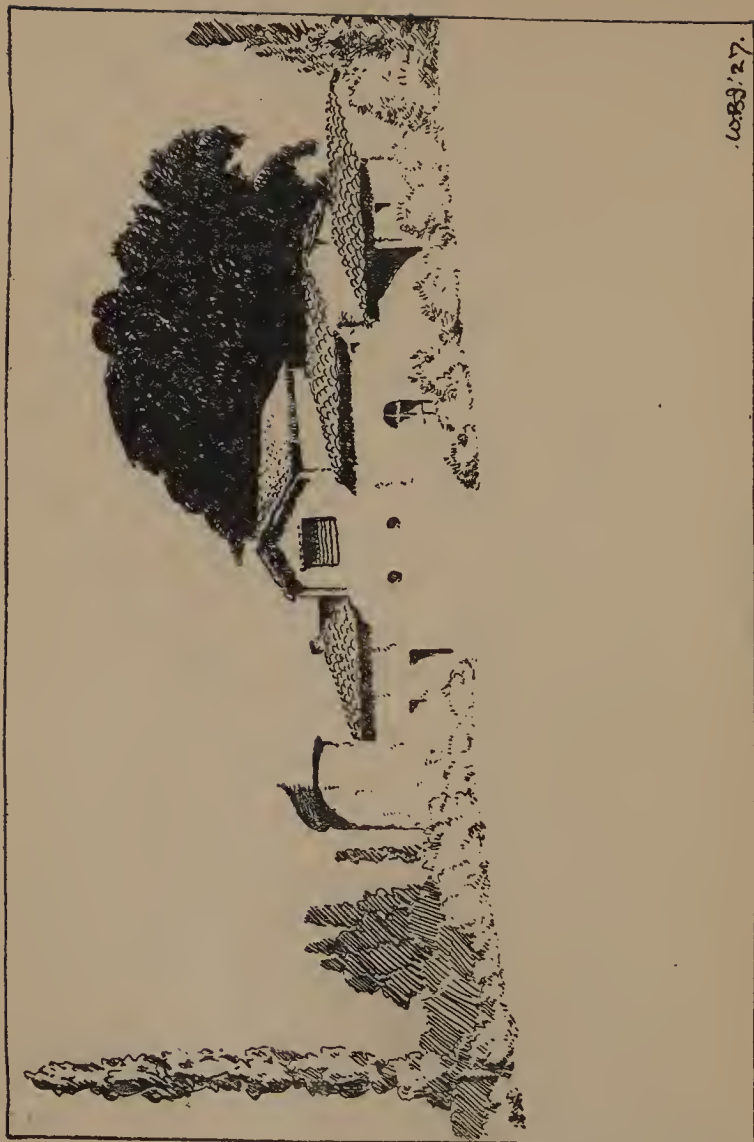
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FOLKTALES OF PROvence

By the Same Author

FOLKTALES OF BRITTANY
AMONG FRENCH FOLK
FIRE FIGHTING



A Provençal Mas

FOLKTALES OF PROVENCE

BY
W. BRANCH JOHNSON

WITH EIGHT SKETCHES BY
THE AUTHOR

CHAPMAN
AND HALL^{LD}



LONDON: MCMXXVII

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To
MY MOTHER

There is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think to do best if they go furthest from the superstition formerly received ; therefore care would be had that (as fareth in ill purgings) the good be not taken away with the bad.

—*Francis Bacon.*

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INTRODUCTION

NEXT to Brittany, which in summer at least comes near to justifying its ancient name of *Petit Bretagne*, Provence is probably the most popular district in France with English visitors. That this should be so is scarcely surprising; its climate, its scenery, its history all combine to make it the ideal holiday playground. It offers a variety rich even among the riches of France—wind and sun and a sweet balminess, mountain and plain and river valley, stories of love, stories of war, legends of saints, legends of devils; and over all shines the Mediterranean charm of the Provençal people.

The Provençal nation—and it is very nearly true to speak of them to-day as a nation, so sturdily do they maintain their spirit of independence and national feeling—are of mixed origin, deriving almost as much from the east as from the north and west. The sort of folk they are may be judged from the fact that they can laugh at themselves—no mean accomplishment, for-

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sooth ! Once upon a time, they say, there lived in a village a countryman who was in the habit of selling his produce in Marseilles ; and invariably upon his arrival home his fellow-villagers would crowd round him demanding to know what had happened that day in the great town. Very patiently and faithfully would he recount to them the day's news ; but at last he grew tired of their insatiable curiosity, so that when next they repeated the eternal question he looked solemnly at them and replied :

“ *Tron de l'air*, you ask me what has happened ! Why, my good friends, there has appeared at Marseilles to-day a fish—what a fish !—oh, the very devil of a fish ! It was of such a size that it tried to swallow the town, but its head became jammed between the entrance piers of the harbour and every time it opens its mouth the harbour runs dry. Of such a size it is !—why, didn't I tell you that its tail is beyond the horizon ? . . . And you ask me what has happened ! ”

He found himself speaking the last sentence to the empty air. But he went on describing the fish because he enjoyed it and liked the sound of his own voice ; and one or two small boys strolled up and presently disappeared with the rest. And then he heard the sound of *sabots* clattering down the village street ; and

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like a river in spate every man, woman and child ran past him on the road to Marseilles.

The countryman was surprised at finding himself, as he thought, alone in the village. From house to house he went but discovered nobody ; until at last he came upon an old man bed-ridden in a cottage.

“ Tell me truly, my friend,” broke out the astonished countryman, “ has the village gone mad that they take to their heels in this fashion ? ”

“ Mad ? Of course not,” replied the old man. “ They are gone to see the great fish at Marseilles.”

The countryman stared at him in utter amazement.

“ Then it must be true, after all ! ” he cried ; and darting out of the cottage he pelted down the road in the wake of his own dupes.

In this story may be seen the Provençal's estimate of himself ; it is not wholly an erroneous estimate. The Provençal has his full share indeed of imagination, of love of exaggeration, of credulity ; he has his share also of wonder—sometimes irreverent—at the world about him, and hope—sometimes sceptical—in the world to come. But because of the broad Rhône flowing through his country-side and of the fertility of his soil, he has lived for centuries

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not so much in a garden as in a line of traffic ; and life in a thoroughfare does not make for the peaceful accumulation of folklore and folk-practice. Greek and Roman, Visigoth and Hun, Arab and Saracen, Norman and German, Englishman, Spaniard, and Italian, have all at one time or another invaded, conquered, fought over, settled in, ruled, failed to rule, terrorized or loved this fair land of Provence. Its borders have swelled and shrunk till they resemble in silhouette a blanket under which a lot of boys are playing leap-frog. It has waged perpetual warfare with its own integral parts no less than with foreigners. It has not lived in the accepted sense of the word ; it has seethed, as a cauldron of boiling water bubbles and overflows with the activity of its own heat and energy.

Little wonder then that folk practices are less rich in Provence than in some other provinces of France. But, on the other hand, an active history may prove an abundant source of legend. In Provence legends abound ; they form the natural outlet of an imagination free and uncompromising in its tendencies. Even less than a century ago it was possible to gain general credence for the story that a statue of Our Lady at Toulon wept on the occasion of an outbreak of cholera ; and, a few years later, that the wounds

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of Christ bled and a phantom waving a sword and crying "War or famine!" appeared upon the Church of St François during an Anglo-French crisis. Less than a century ago the imagination of the Provençal was still bubbling; nor is it quieted to-day, as you will see for yourself if you talk for half an hour to any true son of the Midi. But to-day its direction is less guileless.

With the advent of easy transport facilities Provence has become the playground of a cosmopolitan host as destructive as Arab or Saracen, Goth or Vandal. The modern traveller, though he may bring material prosperity to the country he visits, seldom enriches it mentally or spiritually. At his approach the land becomes arid of beauty; deceit and avarice stalk abroad. And before he succeeds in turning Provence into a den of thieves, I offer this little book to those who, loving it, love also the common people, the only true inheritors of its history and its beauty.

CHAPTER ONE

The Legend of the Marys

§ I

IN all Provence is no fairer legend nor one more deeply ingrained in the hearts of the people than that which tells how the closest friends of Christ were put by the Jews after His death into a little boat and left to drift at the mercy of the waves. Lazarus there was, whom Christ had raised from the dead, and his sister, Martha; Mary Magdalen; Mary Jacobe, sister of the Virgin, and Mary Salome, mother of James and John; and the Jews would gladly have slain them save for the effect of their courage in death and their faith upon the people.

So a boat without sails or oars, rudder or food was launched and into it the hapless women and Lazarus were thrust. As it drifted away from the shore on its cruel mission it was seen by Sarah, the handmaiden of Mary Jacobe and of the mother of James and John; and she cried out after it that she too would share the

fate of them that had treated her with kindness. Whereupon Mary Jacobe, taking the cloak from her shoulders, threw it upon the waves ; it sped miraculously to the shore and Sarah, seating herself upon it, was borne over the sea to her mistress.

Gradually the little boat glided out of the sight of land ; so that those who were on shore could not see that an angel was at the helm, piloting it past dangerous reefs and through storms and tempests towards an unknown destination. How long it took to accomplish its mysterious journey no one can tell ; but this much is certain, that the day came when, following one of those white strips of foam from the horizon which are called *Les Chemins des Saintes-Maries*, it grounded upon a flat, arid shore and the weary exiles knew that they had reached that part of Provence which is called the *Camargue*. Gladly they disembarked, built for themselves an altar, and then, using the upturned boat as a roof, a shelter against the winds that swept down from the north. For a space they rested, satisfying their hunger with shellfish and quenching their thirst at a spring which, upon their arrival, had bubbled up from the ground at their feet.

Now because they knew the people of the

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country were pagan, they could not rest in peace but must labour to bring to them the Word that had cast its light over their own lives. Only Mary Jacobe, and Mary, mother of the two Apostles, remained, because they were old, upon the shore with Sarah ; and to the oratory which they built the wild fishermen of the Camargue would come to listen to their teaching and to bring them simple gifts. Sarah, too, was wont to make journeys to such villages as were near at hand that she might beg the necessaries of life for her mistresses ; and because of her humility and simple service she has come to be regarded as the Patron Saint of gypsies, who gather from every corner of France on the 24th of May to pay homage to her and to the two greater saints whose relics are housed by the fortress-like church which stands to-day upon the site of their ancient dwelling.

Since the fifteenth century the upper part of the church has stood there, a desolate pile of buildings surrounded by a huddled village and a wind-swept marsh. In the early days of Christianity the spot was a favourite pilgrimage resort ; but the Arabs and the Saracens destroyed the original church, and by the tenth century nothing of it or of the village about it remained, save an altar guarded by a hermit.

One day a Count of Provence came upon the altar while hunting and learned from its guardian the story of its past ; he determined to raise it once more to its former popularity and to make a church there that should be a sure stronghold of the Faith against the invading infidel. Some four centuries later, King René discovered beneath this church the bodies of the holy women, their hands reverently folded upon their breasts, and exhaling a sweet perfume ; whereupon, amid fervour and rejoicing, he enclosed them in the richly adorned reliquaries which are lowered on ropes of flowers once every year from their resting place in the roof of the nave to the floor of the church. He also enlarged to its present size the little fortress of Christianity which had, unknown to its original architects, guarded the holy relics ; and the body of St Sarah he set with due reverence in the crypt.

It is on the occasion of the gypsies' feast that the little village of les-Saintes-Maries comes to life ; it did so with greater simplicity and no doubt with greater sincerity before the railway from Arles brought it to the blighting attention of tourists. The 23rd, 24th and 25th of May are great days in the Romany calendar¹—a

¹ There is another pilgrimage in October ; but then the gypsies are absent.

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religious homecoming; the culmination of a year of wandering; formerly, a king-choosing. . . .

No sooner are the caravans encamped about the village and the tents pitched on the waste spaces of the Camargue than their occupants are off to the church, where they reserve seats by leaving cushions, hats, handkerchiefs—any personal belongings—upon them. The church itself is transformed; wooden galleries have been erected round its interior and the altar is ablaze with candles; already a hidden choir is practising and the nave is filled with the stalwart forms of gypsies. The earliest arrivals among their sick have lain all night in the chancel, secure in their hope of healing, and a guard chosen by the pilgrims themselves has been mounted over the tomb of St Sarah. The sound of hymns interspersed with cries of "*Vivent les Saintes Maries!*" floats up to and beyond the high vaulted roof, out into the teeming village, into the vacant spaces of the sea-shore. . . .

During Vespers on the 24th, when the church is packed from floor to vaulting and the Archbishop of Aix or another ecclesiastical dignitary in official attendance, the *châsses* are gradually lowered from the roof. As they draw nearer,

out of Babel emerges for the first time the silence of expectation. Slowly the reliquaries come to their resting place upon the floor of the nave. Babel breaks out again—and with redoubled ardour. A priest has leapt upon them to protect them from the most abandoned of their devotees ; they are besieged by gypsies fighting in their desire to kiss them, to cling to them, to pray at their foot. The sick, borne upon the arms of the strong, strain every nerve to touch one or other of them with their afflicted limbs ; they, like their more fortunate brethren, struggle passionately to achieve their object or to come as near to its achievement as the crowd will allow ; even umbrellas rubbed along the sides of the *châsses* are said to derive therefrom miraculous powers of healing. Throughout the night the reliquaries remain upon the floor of the nave while the stream of adoring pilgrims gradually thins and the sick alone remain in prayer and supplication.

After High Mass on the following morning a procession, with banners flying and headed by the Archbishop, makes its way singing hymns and canticles from the church to the sea-shore, bearing a boat containing a representation of the Marys. And just as the angel-led vessel of old floated upon the many-coloured Provençal

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sea, so is this crude model set for a moment upon the water while sounds of praise mingle with the breaking of the wavelets on the beach. Then the boat is elevated once more on the shoulders of them who had borne it shorewards; the procession re-formed returns to further devotions in the church. But on this third day religious fervour is tempered by fervour of more earthly quality. The French Tricolour predominates; there are races, bull-fights and dances; local inn-keepers break their annual trade records; all night the village is swept by gusts of laughter and song. And next morning—a train of departing caravans, a litter of rubbish, celebration past . . . a fierce sun beneath which shimmers the desolate village of les-Saintes-Maries.

While, then, the two Marys passed their declining years upon the shores of the Camargue, Lazarus and Mary Magdalen made their way to Marseilles. Here Lazarus preached to such effect and performed so many miracles that he converted its inhabitants, was chosen its first Bishop and finally its Patron Saint; and he lived, it is said, in the catacombs beneath what is now the Church of St Victor. For many centuries his Feast was celebrated, according to a writer in 1645, “by dances that have the

appearance of theatrical representations, through the multitude and variety of the figures performed. All the inhabitants assemble, men and women alike, wear grotesque masks, and go through extravagant capers. One would think that they were satyrs fooling with nymphs. They hold hands, and race through the town, preceded by flutes and violins. They form an unbroken chain, which winds and wriggles in and out among the streets, and this they call the Grand Branle. But why this should be done in honour of St Lazarus is a mystery to me, as indeed are a host of other extravagances of which Provence is full, and to which the people are so attached, that if anyone refuses to take part in them, they will devastate his crops and his belongings."

Mary Magdalen, after a sojourn at Aix, retired to expiate her sins by thirty long years in the gloomy cavern of la Sainte-Baume (habitation up till then of a dragon which terrorized all the district), surrounded by a deep forest whose trees, according to Lucan, would shed their leaves of their own accord, and watered by the little river Jaut declared to have sprung from her tears.¹ To this same cave, after her death,

¹ Although the Golden Legend declares that "she had no comfort of running water, ne solace of trees, ne of

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came many hermits and anchorites, and a monastery was built near by only to be destroyed by the Saracens, so that what had been a spot revered by Provençal folk from the earliest times was practically forgotten until the end of the thirteenth century. Thenceforward, however, its fame has never dwindled; Popes and Kings have visited it as pilgrims, and the sanctity of her who once occupied it is such that she is invoked all over France. She has special delight in her Provençals, nevertheless; she guards them against lightning and advises them upon affairs of the heart—young folk who would marry, after having drunk a cup of water from the Jaut, arrange three flat stones in a triangle, with a fourth in the centre, upon the ground, and if, a year later, the stones remain undisturbed, they draw from them happy omen. Not more than a century ago it was the custom for all newly-married folk to go in pilgrimage to the cavern of la Sainte-Baume in order to ensure success in rearing a family; and this visit was faithfully recorded by the erection of a pile of stones (the number of stones in the pyramid corresponding to the number of children desired), herbs.” Another legend tells that God created the stream in order to allow Mary Magdalen, after seven years of penance, to wash her hands.

so that the whole hill-side seemed pock-marked with them.¹ In addition, it was necessary for the couple to embrace a certain oak-tree in the forest ; but nobody could tell exactly which oak was the right one, and a convenient excuse was therefore always to hand should the worthy pilgrimage fail in its object.

Those who were scrupulous in their devotion to the Saint were more than certain of her protection ; the marks of horses' hoofs on the edge of a precipice at la Sainte-Baume bear witness to a miracle by which she saved the lives of two pilgrim merchants by seizing their bridles one dark night just as they were about to ride to their death. But on the other hand she has no mercy for those who neglect her. Between Barjols and Brignoles was once a village which, instead of repairing to her shrine upon the 22nd of July, which is the day of her feast, spent its time in drinking and dancing. When the licence of its conduct began to pass all bounds a hideous storm broke out ; rain fell in torrents, rivers overflowed their banks and water issued from the earth to destroy the offending village. In its place the placid waters of the Étang de Bras now reflect the surrounding hills ; and every

¹ The peasants of Marseilles sometimes place stones on the branches of trees to ensure their bearing abundantly.

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year upon the eve of St. Magdalen may be heard the cries and groans of the villagers of old condemned to eternal torment.¹

Perhaps the greatest adventure of all those experienced by the saintly pioneers from the Camargue awaited St Martha, who made her way to Tarascon. The little red-roofed town of Tartarin—of which it is declared that when God was distributing fools the sack split over Tarascon—was at that time known as Nerluc and was overawed by a terrible dragon, “half beast half fish, greater than an ox, longer than a horse, having teeth sharp as a sword and horned on either side, head like a lion, tail like a serpent, and defended him with two wings on either side and could not be beaten with cast of stone nor with other armour and was strong as twelve lions or bears: which dragon lay hiding and lurking in the river and perished them that passed by and drowned ships. . . . To whom Martha at the prayer of the people came into the wood and found him eating a man. And she cast on him holy water and showed him the Cross, which anon was overcome, and standing

¹ A somewhat similar tale is told of a village near Besse, on the other side of Brignoles, which neglected the feast of St. Anne. What probably happened, of course, was a landslide or the bursting of a mountain lake.

still as a sheep, she bound him with her own girdle"—another version says that it was her garter—"and then (he) was slain with spears and glaves of the people. The dragon was called of them that dwelt in the country *Tharasconus*"—or in modern phrase, the *Tarasque*; ¹ and if you have the temerity to doubt the legend you may see the *Tarasque* for yourself in the *Hôtel de Ville* at *Tarascon*. He is a fearsome monster covered with bristling iron spikes, his countenance lit by a leer of ghastly depravity; he moves on wheels, and until recently it was the custom to drag him round the town on two occasions every year. On the first occasion—at *Whitsuntide*—he needed little enough propulsion; he was the *Tarasque rampant*, running amok among the onlookers and dealing shrewd blows with his tail—blows delivered by means of a man hidden inside his body. On his second

¹ Dragons were common in Provence. One of them lived near *Arles*, in some meadows by the side of the river, and for three years made a practice of devouring innocent townsfolk. At *Marseilles* *St Victor* slew another which lived on the spot where his abbey now stands. At *Aix* *St André* killed a third; and at *Draguignan* *St Armentaire* disposed of a fourth which lived in a cave and poisoned men by its breath. Dragons were also found at *Cavaillon*, *Vaucluse*, *Lurs* (*Basses-Alpes*) and in the *Camargue*; and on the borders of Provence, the village of *Montdragon*, near *Orange*, carries its legend in its name.

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annual outing—the Feast of St Martha, on the 29th of July—he played a subdued, in fact an ignominious part. He was led round the town which he had almost literally painted red by a small girl who held him with a silken cord; and he was jeered at by the populace and pelted with rotten fruit and vegetables and finally ducked in the river.

Although St Martha's chief association is with Tarascon where she is buried, she is not unknown at Avignon. "And on a time at Avignon when she preached between the town and the river Rhône there was a young man on that other side of the river desiring to hear her words and had no boat to pass over: he began to swim naked, but he was suddenly taken by the strength of the water and anon suffocated and drowned, whose body was found the next day. And when it was taken up it was presented at the feet of Martha for to be raised to life. Then she in the manner of a cross fell down to the ground and prayed in this manner: O Adonay Lord Jesu Christ which raisedst sometime my well-beloved brother, behold my dear guest to the faith of them that stand here and raise this child. And she took him by the hand, and forthwith he arose, living, and received the holy baptism."

In the seventeenth century the cave in which St. Martha dwelt with her servant Marcelle at Avignon was still pointed out; and she was believed to have established a Church and a monastery in the town.

§ 2

Our first written record of the legend of the Marys dates back to 1448, when King René was searching for the sacred relics at les-Saintes-Maries; though obviously it had been born long before. In the early versions it is simple enough; it concerns merely the three Marys, Martha and Lazarus. But as time passed, more and more saints were crowded into the little craft that was launched from the inhospitable shores of Judea. Sarah makes her appearance, and Marcelle, the handmaiden of Martha. Maximin, Saturnin, Trophime, Eutrope, Martial, Rufus and others join them; but from the Camargue they wander far afield and are lost to our present inquiry.

Of Sarah the tale has been already told; Marcelle followed her mistress to Tarascon; Eutrope, after converting Orange, made his way to Saintes, near the Biscayan coast, and died its first Bishop; Saturnin founded the See of Toulouse; Martial evangelized the country

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about Limoges, in the Department of Haute Vienne, where his memory is still held in great veneration. Only Maximin, Trophime and Rufus (who is reputed first Bishop of Avignon) remained in Provence.

Tradition has not been generous with St Maximin, who brought the Light to Aix and became its first Bishop. Both he and Mary Magdalen (whose body he tended after death) were said to have been buried in the little town of St-Maximin, between Aix and Brignoles, and this circumstance led to the establishment of an extremely popular pilgrimage and the foundation of a prosperous Abbey on the site of the tombs. But it was Mary Magdalen rather than her brother in Christ who drew the pilgrims, for all that he gave his name to the town; and when at the time of the Saracen invasions it was rumoured that her relics had been carried into safety at Vézelay in Burgundy, pilgrims flocked thither and the Provençal treasure-house languished. Three centuries later, however, it was affirmed that the holy body had all the while lain hidden beneath the crypt at St Maximin; whereupon Vézelay fell into decay and Provence was once again in the ascendant. But in the meantime the relics of St Maximin had been translated to Aix Cathedral.

St Trophime also has left few tales by which his memory may be made vivid. The best known of them describes how he met with great opposition from both clergy and people in his attempts to establish a Christian burial ground in the Aliscamps at Arles. At last, when all the Bishops of Gaul had been induced to assemble, he could find no one of them who would take upon himself the duty of consecrating it. But God does not so easily abandon the devout among His servants; Christ our Lord, at the head of a troop of angels, came down from Paradise and performed the ceremony; and on the spot where He knelt was built the Chapel, since dedicated to St Honorat, and known as La Genouillarde. There, too, St Trophime himself was laid to rest;¹ and the story of his burial and of the miraculous consecration combined to make the Aliscamps renowned throughout Provence, so that there was no one but aspired to sleep there his long sleep. The dead from near and far were carried thither; sometimes, when friends were too poor to equip a proper funeral cortège, the corpse robed for burial was set in a skiff on the broad waters of

¹ His body was translated in the twelfth century to the Church at that time dedicated to St Stephen, but thereafter known by his name.

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the Rhône and carried on its last journey by the current of the river. A few coins laid in the lifeless palm were intended to defray the costs of interment and Masses ; and it was considered a holy work to tow these sad skiffs ashore and perform the last offices for the lonely voyager.

The evangelist of Arles is said also to have converted Vence to Christianity. But no trace of him remains there and but few at Arles itself. A little rock cell at the Abbey of Montmajour is known as his confessional, and his staff—actually an ancient boundary stone of the land held by the Abbey—is to be seen on the road that leads from Tarascon to Aix.

§ 3

It is told at les Baux that once—no one knows when—a pestilence broke out in the town hitherto regarded as so wind-swept that no contagion could touch it. Despite all the efforts of the clergy to propitiate the saints, pestilence stalked grimly from door to huddled door, and there was no staying it ; until at last a peasant of long memory recalled how, on that occasion many years ago when the Marys had visited les Baux, the welcome of the inhabitants had been far from gracious. Here then, he declared, was their punishment ; the present affliction was

plainly a visitation from God. So that there was great repentance among the people; and further to make amends they carved upon the face of a rock near the town the figures that are to this day called the Tremaié; and they fell down and worshipped them; and the pestilence slackened and ceased.

This story—still a living one—enshrines the popular belief that the figures carved upon the Tremaié represent those of the three Marys; it is said sometimes that the bas-relief was made to celebrate their first landing in Provence. But tradition has a habit of arriving at a truth which might at first glance seem to conflict sadly with the truth of history; taken together with the legend, the Tremaié focuses with remarkable sharpness the whole story of Provence in the days of transition from Paganism to Christianity.

At a date a little more than a century before Christ, Provence, then in the hands of the Romans, was threatened by an invasion from the north by Teutons, Ambrons and other tribes; three hundred and sixty thousand fighting men, it was said, were among them. The Romans, alive to the danger hanging over their fairest province, sent the famous general Caius Marius to avert it; but meanwhile the barbarians had turned towards and entered Spain, so that if they

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had still intentions against the populous and fertile tracts of the Rhône valley they must approach it by way of Perpignan, Narbonne and Montpellier, skirting north of the lagoons of Aigues Mortes and entering the valley itself in the region of Tarascon. This was in fact their actual route ; at les Baux Marius had been waiting for them. He drew them to a pre-arranged battle-ground of his own choosing between Pourrières and Aix, and there delivered so crushing a blow that a hundred thousand of the enemy were slain and three times that number of camp-followers and women exterminated or sold into slavery. Then in the centre of his corpse-strewn field—grimly known to posterity as the Campi Putridi—he collected his booty and lit from it an enormous pyre, whose remains in ashes and melted metals, burnt earth and calcined pottery, have been discovered of recent years.

To the north-east of Aix and on the western extremity of the battlefield is a steep hill which goes by the name of Mont-Sainte-Victoire. Later generations have created a Christian saint out of a pagan victory ; for no St Victoire ever existed and the name does but commemorate the defeat and extermination of the barbarians. The chapel near the summit stands upon the site of a pre-Christian monastery and shrine ; and

until the time of the Revolution the people of Pertuis, across the Durance, used every year upon the 24th of April, the traditional anniversary of the battle, to march in procession to it, light a bonfire and dance with garlands on their heads, shouting "Victoire ! Victoire !" During the night they returned, bearing boughs and branches and still shouting and singing ; and at dawn Mass was said by the *cure* of Vauvenargues and all moved to gaze, doubtless with mixed emotions, at the Garagaï, the precipice down which Marius hurled his prisoners on the advice of his Syrian prophetess.

Wild stories were told of the Garagaï. It was said that from its depths oracles spoke in pagan days ; that, indeed, they would answer the questions put to them by Christian inquirers did but the Christian consent to perform strange rites and heathen ceremonies. Not unnaturally the clergy inveighed against such practices and denounced those who resorted to them ; but ecclesiastical tirades could have but slow effect upon a people in whose veins ran so strong a current of pagan blood.

Popular memories of the Roman general himself are thick upon the ground in this district of Provence. There are "le bain de Marius," "la porte de Marius," "le camp de Marius" in the

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immediate neighbourhood of the battle; and he is said to have built in a single night a causeway three and a half kilometres in length across the Étang de Berre near Marseilles. Each of his soldiers, runs the tale, carried a sack of earth which he emptied in the appropriate spot; and so large was the Roman army that the lake was spanned between dusk and dawn.

Now although he made intensive preparations for meeting the barbarians, Marius does not seem, while awaiting their arrival at les Baux, to have confined himself solely to the task ahead. Possibly to encourage his men, possibly to pass the time, he caused his image to be graven upon the rocks of the district; and in them appears not only Marius himself, thick-necked and squat of figure as on the triumphal arch at St Rémy, erected by his relative, Cæsar, but also of his wife Julia and of his prophetess Martha. Most of these rock figures have disappeared; but one remains—the Tremaié. Its appellation was first due to the belief that it represented the three figures of Marius—*tres Marii imagines*. But the evangelization of Provence and the necessity experienced by the priests of those strenuous days to make Christian capital out of whatever came their way, according to the counsels of St Gregory and St Augustine to destroy not but

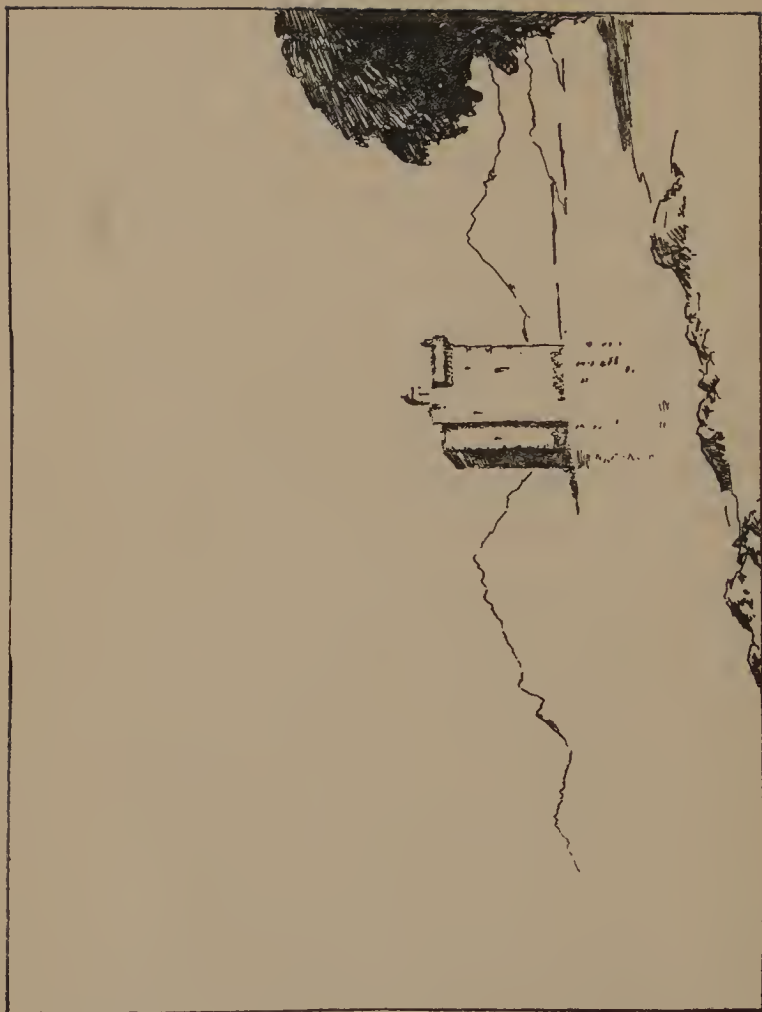
rather bend the pagan customs and usages to the service of God,—these considerations made desirable a new interpretation of the Tremaié. This new interpretation was the more easily arrived at when it was discovered that some at least of the figures on the Roman bas-relief were not men but women. Gradually in the course of centuries the Tremaié became the Trois Maries ; Marius was forgotten and the legend of the Christian Saints was born.

It is not difficult to speculate upon the course of its development as time, imagination, religious sentiment and repetition endeared it to the Provençal mind. Marius himself might be transformed gradually into Lazarus ; the similarity of name between the Syrian prophetess and the Christian saint provided an easy medium for the merging of the one into the other, and the dragons of Tarascon and elsewhere might well resolve themselves into the approaching barbarian horde ; possibly Julia found herself placed in the shoes of Mary Magdalen. And what of the two Marys upon the shores of the Camargue ? Simply this : that a Roman shrine probably stood where the Church of les-Saintes-Maries now rears itself above the waste, and that in the early days of Christianity a chapel there was dedicated to Our Lady of Ships and

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was a popular pilgrimage with sailors. As the legend grew the spot would suggest itself as an appropriate landing place for the saintly exiles. And having thus created a vision and a justification of his place in Paradise, the medieval Provençal embellished it with all those saints who, though probably for the greater part of oriental origin, actually lived over a space of several hundred years.

Like an insubstantial pageant the legend of the Marys fades at the approach of history; *c'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas la vérité*. Yet to many generations of devout men and women it and the folk practices that have clustered round it have afforded consolation, help and strength in times of trouble, and joy in days of gladness and prosperity. Let history pull down and destroy as it will; the unmasking of objective truth is its function and ruthlessness its method. But error, maybe, is not without value in this imperfect world; and we who are not historians may still follow the Saints. For their legend enshrines its own truth and increases the loveliness of lovely Provence; and there is not so much beauty in our lives that we can afford to neglect it.



The Shore near Cannes.

CHAPTER TWO

A Cradle of Saints

§ I

A FEW hundred yards off the Cap de la Croisette at Cannes stand two low and rocky islands, roughly oval in shape and prettily wooded. On the nearer of them—the Ile Ste-Marguérite—a fort, albeit now used as a military convalescent camp, recalls grim memories of Richelieu and the Spaniards and the Man in the Iron Mask. The farther of them—the Ile St-Honorat—was to Provence in the Dark Ages what Lindisfarne was to Northumbria—a breakwater spiritual and material against the pirate, the infidel and the invader, a storehouse and a garden of learning and culture, a beacon light in a time of obscurity. It might prove of almost sensational interest to speculate upon the history of Provence—even of Europe—had not St Honorat landed in the fifth century and established his monastery upon the Iles des Lérins.

Once, declare the people of the mainland,

there were not two isles but one ; and that was employed by Satan as a prison for his recalcitrant followers. But God commanded a saint, whose name has been forgotten, to tear down Satan's temple and to submerge the isle utterly beneath the waters. And the saint, who was very powerful, did so. Then God commanded him to raise the island once more from the bottom of the sea ; on its journey it broke ; and now there are two isles. But Satan has not even yet given up hope of re-capturing his old territory ; and sometimes on dark nights the terrifying cries may be heard of the Devil and the Saint fighting for its possession.

The story of another immersion of the island tells how for ages the Ile St-Honorat was shunned on account of the venomous snakes which overran it ; it had, as a matter of fact, that reputation among the Greeks who had originally colonized it, and their colony had fallen into decay. When St Honorat decided to build there his monastery, it became necessary to cleanse it of such inhabitants ; the Saint therefore climbed a tree (the stump of which used to be shown near the church), repeated the words of the Gospel, " Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy ; and nothing shall by any means hurt you," and prayed that

the serpents might be expelled from this Paradise ; whereupon the isle sank beneath the waters, leaving the Saint high and dry in his leafy nest ; and when it again arose not one serpent was anywhere to be seen.

St Honorat¹ was indeed justified in calling the site he had chosen a Paradise ; he was one of that great army of early monastic builders whose appreciation of and love for the beauties of this world seems no less vivid than their faith and hope in the next. It is sheltered from the open sea by tiny islets and by a reef which bears the name of the Frères or Moines ; a spring of clear, fresh water (attributed by later generations to a miracle performed by the Saint) bubbles up in its midst ; and although the soil is poor, that of its companion isle is exceptionally fertile, and game abounds. Indeed, so fertile is the Ile Ste-Marguérite that it can be accounted for only by the legend which tells how on it St Honorat established a nunnery for his sister, whose name it bears, and how she used to visit him once every month. Dearly as he loved her, he could not

¹ It is sometimes said that the famous Rue St Honoré, in Paris, is named after St Honoratus of Arles ; this is error. The street is named after St Honoratus of Amiens, Patron Saint of bakers, and at one time was the centre of the baking industry of Paris.

but feel the danger to his soul in this constant contact with a woman ; he prayed that the sea might divide them ; and that night the sea washed its way between the two islands. Yet out of pity for her he promised that he would visit her still whenever the cherry trees blossomed. Then St Marguérite prayed in her turn ; her prayer was answered and the cherry trees blossomed every month ; and every month St Honorat was compelled by his own promise to cross the little strait which separated him from his sister.¹

The stories that have clustered round the name of St Honorat point to his early pre-occupation with spiritual things. Of high parentage, he is said to have come from Lorraine, where his father, who had mapped out for him a distinguished career, spent a great deal of time in alternately thrashing him and cajoling him into taking part in manly sports and pleasures.

“It is true that I love these things,” declared the youthful Honorat, “and yet at the same time I feel them to be only the shadows of life.”

So his father, as a last resort, sent the boy's brother Venace to bring him to his senses. The

¹ An alternative story declares that St. Marguérite continued her visits to her brother by placing her veil upon the water and walking upon it to his monastery.

result was disastrous : Honorat it was who converted Venace, and together, guided only by an old man, now widely revered as St Caprais, they set out through France, reached Marseilles, and embarked for the East, where they spent many years in contemplation and in preaching the Gospel. At last Venace died in Greece ; Honorat returned with Caprais, landed once more at Marseilles, and after a sojourn in a cavern near le-Trayas began upon what was to prove his life-work at Lérins. Gradually the little cell upon the island attracted more and more hermits, living like Egyptian cenobites each in solitude and united only by obedience and prayer. A chapel was erected ; one after another, buildings rose about it as the requirements of the community grew. The Benedictine Order took charge and converted it into a monastery of approved Western pattern (although some relics of its former orientalism remain in the isolated towers by which it is still in part surrounded). The raids of Saracens and pirates necessitated the fortified keep-like building which displays itself so prominently upon the southern extremity of the island, in which the monks could live in times of crisis and the relics of their founder find sure refuge. In its hey-day nearly four thousand monks inhabited the isle.

But worldly success did not come in the days of St Honorat. He was often hard put to it to find the wherewithal to feed his flock. The tale is told that once he gave to a blind beggar the last piece of money the monastery possessed.

“If we are so poor that we have nothing more to give,” he said, “then we cannot but be near receiving.”

And within three or four hours, such had been his faith, an unexpected gift was made to the monastery sufficient to supply the most pressing of its necessities.

When such acts of charity as this became known and talked of, it is not surprising that the monastery of Lérins and its saintly founder became dear to all the country-side. No passing traveller but would essay to spend the night there; no sailor but would interrupt his voyage, however propitious the weather, to ask the Saint's blessing. Over all the region St Honorat shed his kindly light while himself practising constant austerity; “in him,” wrote one of his monks, “we find not only a father but an entire family, a country, the whole world.” Upon this reputation he was chosen to succeed the evil Patroclus in the Archbishopric of Arles; greatly as he loved his Paradise of Lérins, he heeded the bidding of God and accepted the call; but only for a few years did

the high responsibilities of office rest upon him. He longed always to be back in his monastery ; and worn out with his austerities he died after preaching one day in his church. As he lay upon his death-bed, those who were about him begged him to cease from the labours he even then continued to perform ; but he chided them for so doing and exhorted them to encourage him in working to the end. It is said that his spirit became visible to men on its way to Heaven, and that many awoke in the night he died and found themselves they knew not how on the road to the church, that they might venerate his mortal remains. He was buried with St Trophime in the Aliscamps, but translated at a later date to the dearest of his earthly homes, his own monastery.

Few miracles are officially accredited to St Honorat after his death ; he is said to have prayed for the withdrawal of the power by which they might be performed. His spirit lives in devotion to his work and in his humility ; and in it we may see a reflection of his friend and chief councillor, St Caprais, of whom it was written that “ his charity was quick, his humility profound, his sweetness extreme, his faith and hope firm and unshakable, his modesty perfect, his obedience prompt, his abstinence regular, his

spirit clear, his perseverance never-ending." St Caprais is a considerable figure in the hagiology of the Midi, although his relics are chiefly at Chartèves near Chateau-Thierry (Aisne) where he used to be invoked for rheumatism and nervous disorders.

Honorat's successor at Arles was his kinsman St Hilaire, who had also been a valued helper at Lérins. St Hilaire had feared that the choice would fall upon him; he fled into the stony wastes of the Crau, but was captured and brought back to the city, surrounded by soldiers, clergy and people. Still he refused to accept unless God gave him a sign; whereupon, so runs the story, a white dove flew down from the sky and settled upon his head.

At the time of his election he was only twenty-nine years of age but already old in piety and good works. Of noble birth, his youth had been spent in pleasure; and when St Honorat approached him to bring about his conversion to the monastic life, Hilaire was stubborn. After long wrestling in vain, St Honorat retired to pray.

"I will obtain from God," he said, "what you now deny me."

And in no more than three days Hilaire had been won. He sold his estates, distributed his

goods among the poor and retired to Lérins, leaving it only at the command of St Honorat that he should aid him in his labours at Arles.

During the nineteen years that Hilaire himself ruled the See, impetuosity of temperament seems to have been his chief characteristic. He quarrelled with his Bishops, he quarrelled with his superiors ; he is said to have crossed the Alps on foot in the depth of winter to defy the Holy Father in Rome, and according to tradition indignant letters were written from St. Peter's against his lack of ecclesiastical discipline. But never did the people of Arles waver in their allegiance to him ; and at his funeral, so runs a medieval tale, nothing could be heard save the lamentations of the Jews he had befriended, who flocked thither in such numbers that they completely overwhelmed the Christians.

Yet during all his years of office Hilaire, like his predecessor Honorat, pined for the little rock-girt isle in the Mediterranean. There can be no doubt that an extraordinary spirit manifested itself at Lérins of that true and universal religion which, not content with dogmas and ceremonies, expended its almost inexhaustible energies in love and charity and brotherliness. From the tales of its founder and his associates, even when much has been discounted, does emerge a picture of

unflinching manliness ; and perhaps to this manly spirit permeating the whole community of monks may be attributed the number of saints whom Lérins cradled. St. Patrick of Ireland, the most famous of its scholars, transmitted its type of monasticism to the Celtic Church. All the illustrious Sees of Southern France were filled by prelates which it had reared. To St Loup de Troyes, St Jacques de Tarantaise, St Valérien de Cimiez, St Maximien de Riez, St Eucher de Lyons and to countless others whose memory is still green in their own country-sides it was a spiritual home. In its doctors the Church found her voice ; the famous rule of Faith, *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus* is the rule of St Vincent de Lérins. Its monk Salvien painted the agony of the dying Empire in his book on the government of God. The long fight towards a broader-minded Christianity against the stern fatalism of Augustine was chiefly waged within its walls.

§ 2

The very fame of St Honorat seems to have led him sometimes into situations from which he emerged with more chivalry than sanctity. A thirteenth-century Troubadour tells the story of Tilburge, the wife of a Count of Narbonne, whose

husband accused her—apparently not without reason—of infidelity to her marriage vows ; but in order to make assurance doubly sure, he proposed to confront her with the mysterious deity which lived in the ruined Roman tower at la Turbie. The wife fled to Lérins ; as the result, St Honorat himself, charmed by her beauty and her wit, gave her both absolution and a portion of his hood which, did she wear it over her head, would confuse the mind of the Pagan spirit in the tower. Tilburge, grateful and comforted, faced the dread cross-examination with complacency ; and the oracle of la Turbie, such was the power of the stuff that had belonged to St Honorat, not merely indignantly denied all indiscretion on the part of the lady but pronounced her *une dame de grand mérite* and her reputation altogether beyond suspicion.

Despite his wish that the power of performing miracles should be withdrawn from him after death, St Honorat, according to the legends, continued for many centuries to exercise himself on behalf of ladies in distress. A mediæval story tells how Azalais de Toulon went for seven years on pilgrimage to his shrine, and on the seventh brought back with her a few leaves from the palm-tree in whose branches he had sheltered. As the result of a pestilence which soon afterwards swept

the country-side, Azalais was reduced to dire poverty ; everything that had been hers she sold, but clung to the palm leaves that had been her dearest possession. At last she was compelled to offer even them ; but instead of the gold for which she had asked, the Jew merchant offered her their weight in copper coin. Yet to his astonishment he could not balance them in his scales against all the copper in his house—nor indeed against all the gold also. Nevertheless he was an honest Jew and as good as his word, for he gave Azalais sufficient wealth to maintain her in comfort for the rest of her life ; while as for himself, the strange circumstance, turning his mind to spiritual things, converted him to Christianity and drew his steps with exemplary regularity to all those places that were dear to the Saint.

§ 3

Great days, those early ones of the monastery of Lérins but—like all great days—not to be maintained. On account of the Moors—after whom the mountains behind it are named ¹—the monastery became half a fortress, and the successors of St Honorat wore armour as easily as vestments.

¹ Although the Provençal will tell you that their name is derived from *mauron*, black, and that they are so called because of the dark forests with which they are covered.

During the Middle Ages it was the focusing point of a guerilla warfare between Genoese corsairs and Provençal nobles. First in the sixteenth and then in the seventeenth centuries the Spaniards descended upon the coast ; both the Ile St-Honorat and the Ile Ste-Marguérîte fell into their hands, and the latter was wrested from them only after a severe struggle. Peace once more ; and it is then that four travellers from Aix—two men of importance and their wives—permit us an entertaining glimpse of monastic life in the year 1687. For, tourist-like, one of the travellers kept a diary and published a book.

The four were on a pleasure cruise from St Tropez to Genoa, and night being upon them they sought shelter in the monastery—that is, after having first obtained a *billet de congé* from the military governor of the Ile Ste-Marguérîte. Armed with this they made their way across the Plateau de Milieu which separates the two islands.

“ We still had time,” writes their chronicler, “ to feast our eyes upon the beautiful lawns which are everywhere to be found on this isle. Then I was deputed to go and warn the monks of the illustrious guests who were to be theirs for the night, so that beds might be prepared. They were scattered over the island enjoying the pleasures of the chase, but at my first overtures hurried to

salute the ladies. Compliments having been exchanged, they accompanied us to their house which was indeed as much like a place of arms and uproar as of piety and retreat. In short, the monastery had been half converted into a citadel, and soldiers dwelt under the same roof as the monks. It is true, however, that the monks had the best of what there was, the largest and most comfortable of the rooms, and that the soldiery—a detachment from the garrison of Ste-Marguélite—occupied only a small part of the tower to the south.”

From the descriptions of the same writer, the ruined tower of to-day assumes once more its splendours of the past. We learn of a wonderful staircase, of a cloister of exceptional beauty, of a great tank which provided both monks and soldiers with water. He describes the church, *qui est un chef d'œuvre* with its fifty stalls and reliquaries of gold and silver ranged behind a grill near the altar ; he waxes enthusiastic over ceilings *tout dorés avec de rares peintures* ; he glows over the library rich in ancient manuscripts ; he expatiates upon the comfort of the apartments set aside for visitors and upon the glory of the view from their windows. He also mentions—just in passing—a billiard-table.

But at last supper was ready ; and the party

found themselves served by a monk "who was as straight of body as if he had swallowed every halberd in the garrison. The charming manner in which he bowed and pirouetted was extremely diverting to the company. Then beds were given to the male guests, but difficulties were experienced over those of the ladies. It was decided that they could not be allowed in the monks' dormitory and that it would be better for them to sleep in the sacristy than in the rooms adjoining. The decision taken, the monks made the ladies' beds with extreme care."

The next morning the four visitors continued their voyage, while the monks removed the beds from the sacristy, continued in their leisure the joy of the chase or, if there were any violent souls among them, carried on the eternal quarrel with their arch-enemy, the Bishop of Grasse. A charming existence indeed ; but even as a passing respite from war, a long way from the steep path of the saints.

§ 4

Our last glimpse of the monastery of Lérins is in the year 1793. Its four thousand monks had dwindled to four ; its conventual buildings had been abandoned and had fallen into decay, the community living entirely within the fort ; the

light of its culture was extinguished. It was submitted to auction by the Revolutionary authorities and bought by a certain Jean Honoré Alziary. Now Alziary had two daughters who, under the name of Mlles Sainval, had met with differing success upon the stage. When the company of the Comédie Française was dissolved, the younger and more successful of them—she who had created the part of the Countess in *Le Mariage de Figaro*—appeared at the island and took up her abode in the fort previously occupied by the monks. For twenty years she scarcely stirred from it ; after so long a retreat she made a sudden re-appearance upon the Parisian boards ; but almost immediately retired again, this time to Draguignan where, under the name of Mlle de Saint-Eyreix, she spent the declining years of her life and passed away in 1836.

Already she is forgotten ; the Saint who settled upon the island in the early days of our era lives. Her mystery is a mundane one ; his a mystery of the spirit. And it is eternally astonishing that, in a world where matter is so insistent, the spiritual in the long run wins.

CHAPTER THREE

Some Guides to Paradise

§ I

THE people of Arles tell the story of a holy man who, ever so long ago, preached in their town with such fervour that Arles became notorious among its neighbours for its sanctity. At last, seeing his work there completed, he made preparations for departure; and the Arlésians lent him a boy to guide him across the stony wastes of the Crau.

For the holy man was blind.

Slowly the two made their way southward under a sun which melted the landscape in a haze of heat. The holy man walked pensively; but as the hours passed and the sun grew more and more fierce the young boy became tired and impatient to rest.

“Father,” he said at last, in a voice of feigned astonishment, “are you not going to preach here?”

“Why should I preach,” came the answer, “when there is no one to hear me?”

“But, father,” persisted the boy, “all around you is a throng of people assembled from outlying farms and distant villages to listen to your message.”

“Yet I do not hear them.”

“That, father, is because they are holding their breath in expectation.”

Greatly rejoicing, therefore, the holy man set himself to preach. Never before had his eloquence been so ardent, his passion of love so all-embracing, his exhortations so moving. Had you heard him, you would have said that never before had he preached so powerfully or with such overwhelming sincerity. Yet for audience he had but a desert of stones, a boy fast asleep—and Heaven.

And as the last words fell from his lips, Heaven, who knew the value of so devout a servant, ordained that he should receive his due reward. Instead of the silence and disillusion that might have been his lot, he heard around him reverent murmurs of “Amen.”

It was the stones that spoke.

But in spite of the Arlésians, the people of Provence do not entertain in general a high opinion of Churchmen. To dream of a priest is thought to presage disgrace; to have a priest in his robes on board a boat or in a cart is to

ruin the fishing or run the risk of being upset. Priests are more than half sorcerers ; they have power to break all witches' spells, they have commerce with evil spirits, they can inflict mysterious violence upon their enemies ; like the *Curé de Cucugnan* in Daudet's story, they can visit Heaven and Hell in quest of their flock. Monks, runs a saying, take all and give nothing. When the Devil has nothing better to do he turns hermit ; at least one hermit is known to have become an evil spirit luring men to death in a deep pool over which he hovers in a bluish light ; and when a hermit outdoes a sorcerer it is only to work still greater wickedness.

A popular story tells how a husband, intercepting a letter from his wife to the *curé* (who in this case is ignorant of it and therefore innocent of evil intent), personates the priest at the rendezvous in the wife's darkened room.

"Madam," he says as he enters, "there is only one thing I must ask of you ; and that is to conform to the ecclesiastical custom of discipline before retiring for the night."

The wife, deceived by her husband's disguised voice, and infatuated with the *curé*, readily accedes to the request ; and the husband, taking care that she should be in the best possible position

to receive it, administers such a thrashing as she has never before had in her life.

Priests, however, are not always so blameless. Once upon a time, a bishop visited a country *curé*; and it occurred to him to place the poker in the bed of the pretty servant girl he found in the house. A year later he paid another visit; but the poker was still missing from its proper place.

“And the strange thing is, Your Reverence,” declared the girl “that we haven’t been able to find it since you were here last time.”

So that taking it by and large, it is scarcely surprising that saints in Provence are less thick upon the ground than in certain other parts of France; which is not to say that they are few. Some typical ones whose legends are here recounted I have divided for convenience into three categories: Saints Provençal by birth; Saints hailing from other parts of France but settling in the Midi; and foreign immigrant Saints. But it is only right that at the outset we should deal with one of the Patron Saints—and the best beloved—of the province.

The story of St Gens is one of youthful faith and piety; for the lad died in his nineteenth year—legend puts it in 1140. He was a poor boy of Monteux, near Carpentras; and when a

drought fell upon his native village he exhorted the people to repent of their sins as the surest way of ending the calamity. But they chased him from the village with stones and harsh words ; he fled to a narrow gorge hard by St Didier and, having erected an altar, passed his days ploughing upon the rocky hillside.

Yet here, even, the youthful Gens was not left undisturbed ; a wolf one day sprang upon one of the oxen at the plough and straightway killed and devoured it. Whereat the boy commanded the savage beast to come to his feet and implore the pardon of Heaven ; and the wolf did so, and harnessed himself to the plough and ever afterwards followed the lad, as tame and gentle as a dog.

Meanwhile the drought at Monteux continued unabated, and for three years no rain fell ; so that the people experienced terrible hardships. At last they bade the mother of St Gens seek her son and bring him to the stricken village ; and it is said that the bells of Monteux ring every year without human aid on the night when St Gens passes by with his mother.

No sooner had the Saint re-appeared among the repentant villagers than clouds gathered in the sky and welcome rain fell in torrents. But the people forgot their gratitude and, chafing

under the yoke of his discipline, treated him scurvily; once more he retired to his hillside accompanied by his faithful wolf. And very soon, worn out by sorrow and his austerities, he died; the shepherds around saw a radiant light descending upon the hut in which he had lived, the birds of the air sang the *Miserere* over his cold body, and the wolf, free now to wander, chose instead to spend the rest of its days in faithfully guarding its master's tomb.

In September and in the Spring the folk of the neighbourhood celebrate his memory by a fête of fireworks and rejoicing. The villagers of Monteux bring his statue, draped with sombre colours, to the borders of the parish of St Didier; and then, as symbolical of his flight, they strip it of its drapery and run with it to the place of pilgrimage. There it is raised on the arms of strong men and all pass beneath it three times; the third time his blessing will surely come upon you. Pilgrims also lay themselves face downward, in a coffin-shaped depression in the earth known as the bed in which he was wont to sleep.

In the same district as St Gens another Saint is said to have been born. He is St Véran, or St Vrain, invoked on behalf of children and their health and revered also in the Cevennes,

where he was Bishop of Mende, and at Orleans, where his relics were translated after his death. The legend most closely associated with his name tells how a dragon of terrible power and ferocity lived in the rocks which bordered the road to the Fontaine de Vaucluse. The intrepid Véran, who was at that time Bishop of Cavaillon, walked into its very den, commanded it in the name of Christ to betake itself elsewhere and, casting his stole about its neck, led it as far as the Montagne de Luberon, between Apt and the Durance. Here the dragon, ashamed and exhausted, made public confession of its sins and, flying into the air like an enormous bat, was never seen again.

Not dragons but storks are associated with St Agricola, an early Bishop and one of the Patron Saints of Avignon. The roofs of the town, according to an old story, were invaded by flights of these birds in unprecedented numbers; and to make matters worse, each stork brought with it a bill-full of dead snakes which it dropped into the narrow streets, so that in time a contagion was set up among the inhabitants. All attempts at dislodging the birds proved useless; more and more putrid snakes littered roads and alleys; and then, at long last, some one bethought him of urging St Agricola

to deal with the problem after his own fashion. The Saint prayed, the storks flew away; and before doing so they obligingly removed the body of every snake they had dropped. It is in memory of this act of St Agricol that snakes appear upon the arms of the church dedicated to him in his native town.

They tell at Marseilles of St Cannat, a man of extraordinary holiness who lived in a hermitage near the little town which now bears his name, between Aix and Salon. His fame having spread to Marseilles, the inhabitants flocked to him begging him to be their Bishop. But St Cannat flatly declined.

“I will accept,” he declared at last, “only when this staff of mine shall blossom”; and he thrust into the ground the staff he was carrying. To the astonishment of everybody the staff became immediately covered with leaves and with flowers of all sorts. The Marseillais set up a great shout of joy; and St Cannat, recognizing the sign, went with them. That is why, on his fête day, his chapel used to be decorated with beflowered staffs, and why those who were specially devoted to him joined in the procession bearing a staff in their hands.

From Marseilles also comes the legend of St Eusébie, who was Abbess over the Convent of



Marseilles from the Château d'If.

St Cyr near the city ; and when the country was invaded by the Saracens she gathered her nuns together and, describing to them the desperate expedient by which she intended to preserve her chastity, advised them to follow her example. When, therefore, the Saracens burst open the gates of the convent, eager to carry off the defenceless women to their ships, they were horrified to find that the Abbess and all the nuns had cut off their noses.

The Patron Saint of Toulon is St Cyprian ; and it is said that whenever his statue is carried round the town his cheek flushes bright red as he enters the Place à l'Huile and remains flushed while the Place is crossed. The legend runs that one day as the Saint was carrying the Holy Sacrament at this spot, a mother whose daughter he had had occasion to chide for the unconventionality of her conduct took the opportunity of smacking his face. The Saint, unable in the circumstances to give way to anger, passed on without so much as looking at her ; but his cheek was seen to flush a bright red—almost as bright, indeed, as that of his statue to-day.¹

Another popular saint of Provence is St

¹ At Brignoles it used to be said that the statue of St Louis de Brignoles smiled as it entered the house where the saint was born and wept as it left it.

Arnoux ; but before he became a saint he was a married man. One day he left his wife to make a journey. Scarcely had he set out, however, than he remembered something he had forgotten. He retraced his steps, arriving home in the middle of the night ; and so as not to disturb his wife he stole gently upstairs to the bedroom. What was his horror at seeing two heads upon the pillow ! Blind with rage, he drew his knife and struck again and again at the vile pair. Only afterwards did he learn that he had stabbed his father and mother who had come to pay him a surprise visit, and whom his wife, thinking to honour them, had put into the best bed. Overcome with shame and remorse, Arnoux fled to a cave near Tourettes-les-Vence and there spent the rest of his days living upon roots, sleeping upon the bare rocks and practising innumerable acts of penance and piety.¹

We must pass over other native-born Saints—St Quinez of Vaison ; St Basse, the Bishop of Nice, who was transfixed by two gigantic nails during the persecution of the Romans ; St Bobo, of La-Pierre-Impie, near Sisteron, alleged deliverer of Provence from the Saracens and invoked both in his own country and in northern Italy

¹ Near by is a spring in which folk afflicted with skin diseases bathe themselves.

against the diseases of sheep—these and other native saints we must neglect in favour of one who in popular esteem outshines them all. It is true that she never courted popularity either in this world or the next; she was of different stamp from St Joseph de Cotignac or St Ferréol de Lorgues, who agreed to play quoits together, the winner to be acknowledged the greater saint. When it came to his turn, St Ferréol, instead of throwing his quoit from a stationary position as is customary in the Provençal game, took three paces forward; at the third pace he bumped into a tree with such force that he was obliged to drop his quoit and steady himself against a rock. The imprint of his fingers may still be seen upon the rock at Lorgues; and that is all that posterity cares for either of the ambitious saints.

On the 16th of October takes place at les Arcs, to the south of Draguignan, a pilgrimage to the tomb of St Rosseline de Villeneuve, invoked against the sorrows that beset all mothers and also against storms and lightning. Her not inconspicuous place in Church history scarcely concerns us here; what is more to our point is that from her earliest years she was filled with a spirit of charity toward the poor. Her father, Arnaud de Villeneuve, Governor of Provence, pretended, in order to test her, to be deaf to the

cries for alms that daily sounded in the courtyard of his château at les Arcs ; and when, once, he saw her approach, her apron filled with food for distribution, he barred her way sternly and demanded what she carried.

“Nothing but roses, Sire,” she answered him, “roses in bloom.”

And she opened her apron for his inspection ; and the food had turned into roses as red as blood and as soft as a maiden’s cheek.¹

While still at an early age, Rosseline decided to give herself to God ; and her father, convinced of her piety, wished—as good fathers will—to ease the difficulties of her profession by building a convent for her at Celle-Roubaud, hard by her native place. But Rosseline spurned comfort and chose instead the isolated Chartreuse de Bertaud on the remote and rocky mountains that separate the Durance and the Drac—a spot snow-bound in winter, parched in summer and inhospitable to view. For thirty long years she never left its walls, practising great austerities the while ; but her fame gradually spread and more than one Church dignitary made toilsome journey to seek her counsel. Then at last she was persuaded to take charge of the convent her

¹ A similar story is told of St Elizabeth of Hungary and other saints.

father had built in the meantime at Celle-Roubaud ; and here she mingled her severities—going, it is said, for a week without so much as a bite of food or a sip of water—with ecclesiastical business of ever-increasing range and importance and with the ordering and care of those in her charge. At a great age she died ; at the moment of her passing, the words “ The Saint is no more ! ” rang out in the night air above a hundred Provençal villages, and her brother Héliou, who was a prisoner of the Saracens, found himself delivered from his chains and riding the air upon her cloak towards his home.

§ 2

Of the Saints who, though French, were not of Provençal origin, St Virgile, the sixth-century Archbishop of Arles, is among the most interesting to us, since it was he who is said to have sent St Augustine to evangelize England and who ordained him Bishop in order to enable him to create the See of Canterbury. But such considerations are of little weight to Provençal folk, who are much more interested in St Virgile's funeral.

He died, according to the legend, while reciting the Holy Office ; and immediately his body exhaled the sweet perfumes of all the flowers in

springtime. Great crowds of mourners followed to the grave the man who had been to them a firm and steadfast friend ; and they were plunged in the most profound despair. Now on the way to the same cemetery was also the body of a village girl ; and it happened that the coffin of the Archbishop touched hers, whereupon the girl rose again to life. For a moment there was stupefaction among the mingled crowds ; and then mourning gave way to rejoicing, and St Virgile was interred with every manifestation of happiness and thanksgiving.

St Virgile came from Aquitaine and had spent his youth at the monastery of Lérins. One day, when he was building the church now dedicated to St Honorat, he found that the workmen were unable to lift a single stone. The greater the number of workmen set to the job, the heavier the stones appeared to grow. At last St Virgile divined both cause and cure of the phenomenon.

“ Oppose spiritual obstacles by spiritual means,” quoth he, and prayed, calling upon Satan to desist from hindering the work of God. Immediately the stones became light as feathers ; but once in place they grew more solid and immovable than rocks.

It is not, however, St Virgile but St Césaire

who has left the greater impress upon the Arles of to-day. Born in Burgundy, St Césaire is declared to have contracted at the early age of seven the habit of parting with his clothes to beggars. While still a youth he ran away from home—somewhat to the relief of his parents, one imagines—and went to Lérins. There he made such rapid progress in theology and developed such sanctity of life that he was chosen to succeed St Virgile, and for nearly half a century was one of the most illustrious and influential ecclesiastics in southern France. The abbey which he built within the walls of Arles is now a granary, and that of his sister (where, it is said, she caused stone coffins to be put round the church for herself and each of her two hundred nuns) has become a private house. But his is one of the influences that still live in the old town; and is kept alive in the country-side by the custom of blessing peach-stones on the day of his feast, the 27th of August, to guard those who carry them against fevers and all distresses of mind.

Just as in Brittany St Jacut is held responsible for the invention of cider, so in Upper Provence has St Donat given saintly sanction to the juice of the grape. When an old man, St Donat was joined in his hermitage in the Montagne de Lure, near Sisteron, by a young Christian from Embrun.

Together they planted a vine by the side of the hut and, pressing the grapes at the right season, consecrated the wine thus made to the service of Christ. From which circumstance, maybe, the Provençal is assured that he can get tipsy with impunity !

When in youth St Donat had travelled from his native Orleans and had first established himself in Provence, Satan, who has a keen eye and a pretty wit for such holy men, sent a dragon to convert him to a more rational mode of living. Very horrible was the dragon, full of stink and smoke and rending cries ; it was surrounded by innumerable serpents, so that the forest seemed alive with them ; and through the vapours of the diabolic cavalcade could be seen the bodies of beckoning women. But St Donat kept firm, praying to God and His Saints for strength and courage ; and after an age of temptation excelling even that of St Anthony, he hurled back the dragon and its poisonous brood ; and at the same time the ghosts that had haunted him vanished into the long vistas of the trees.

Another story connected with St Donat tells how the success of his preaching brought him into conflict with Celsus, the Roman pro-consul, who ordered him to be flogged on the soles of his feet and sent back to his hut, with orders

never again to leave it. But scarcely had the Saint once more installed himself on the Montagne de Lure than the daughter of Celsus was stricken by blindness, calling constantly upon Donat, the fame of whose acts had reached her ears. Love for his daughter fortunately overcame red tape in the soul of the pro-consul; he himself fetched Donat from his banishment, and when the Saint had restored the girl's sight, became converted to the True Faith and offered untold wealth to the miracle worker. But all gifts St Donat spurned, saying that his reward was from God alone; he retired again to his mountain and spent there the rest of his days in solitude.

The most famous (at least with English visitors) of all Provençal saints is the shepherd from Savoy, St Bénézet, the builder of the bridge over the Rhône at Avignon. The story of how an angel appeared to him during an eclipse of the sun as he minded his mother's sheep on the Savoyan hillside, of how he was commanded to build the bridge over the great river, and of how, having been guided by angel hands to Avignon, he lifted the stone thirty men could not lift and placed it in position on the bank of the Rhône, may be read in so many other books that there is no need to repeat it here. There are legends

—such as the one which tells how the Devil reversed an arch and how Bénézet, warned in a dream, travelled back to Avignon to restore it to its rightful position—are less known. It is said that although the Saint himself never touched wine he several times changed the river water into wine for his thirsty companions. But the most startling legend that attaches to his name has nothing to do with the building of the bridge.

He had cause one day to rebuke some dice-throwers for blasphemy. One of the players, resenting his interference, struck him; whereupon the head of the unfortunate man was reversed upon his shoulders, and only by the prayers of the Saint was it finally righted. From which we may learn that it is unwise to strike without having first gauged both the power and the clemency of our opponent.

§ 3

When Provence is considered in the character of a highway from the Levant, it is not surprising that a good many saints (as well as a still greater number of sinners) travelled the long road before finally settling beneath her sunlight. From Corsica came St Devoté and from Greece St Gilles; St Hospice came from Egypt, St Marcellin from Africa and St Maur from Italy;

while Rome bequeathed to us St Victor of Marseilles, St Pons and St Tropez.

St Devoté is Patron Saint of both Corsica and Monaco ; and the ties that bind those two lovely spots are still further strengthened by the tradition that every year Our Lady of Monaco sends to her sister of Cap Corse a barrel of olive oil, while Our Lady of Cap Corse reciprocates the gift with a barrel of wax. St Devoté, whose feast on the 27th of January is still the occasion of a picturesque procession at Monaco, lived in Corsica but was taken to pagan Rome and there so brutally tortured that she died. Her body was secretly carried off by some fellow Christians and embarked for her native island ; but during the voyage a great storm arose and drove the vessel towards the French coast. The captain was at his wits' end ; but a vision of the martyr appeared at the mast-head, bidding him take heart and follow a white dove which should issue from her mouth. And the dove appeared and the storm abated ; in calm the ship sped onward to Monaco, and there the body of St Devoté received burial where the chapel in the gorge, now overshadowed by a hideous railway arch, was afterwards built to house her relics.

She was also the Patron Saint of the Lords of les Baux—those powerful and turbulent

medieval fighters against whose name King René, when he compiled his list of Provençal nobles, wrote the bitter comment "Inconstant." The house was said to have been founded by Balthazar, great-grandson of the Magian of the same name ; it survives now only as the second title of the Prince of Monaco ; and tradition has it that St Devoté appears above the Monégasque rock whenever a crisis in its affairs is impending.

Between Arles and Aigues Mortes lies the abbey of St Gilles, medieval pilgrimage spot of European renown but now dusty and deserted. When it was first built, the Rhône flowed near by and the town was a busy seaport, the busier for the incessant traffic in pilgrims whom the fame of the Saint, still invoked against fire, epilepsy, madness and fear, brought in its train. But now the river has changed its course, and the lagoons which enabled vessels to approach from Italy, Spain and the Levant have evaporated. Only the legend of St Gilles remains to re-create for us the glorious past.

St Gilles the Athenian was, according to a medieval Life, "the flower of youth in his country, his head covered with golden curls, his skin white as milk, his nose and ears of perfect shape, teeth like pearls, and a lovely mouth, he was thin and graceful, supple and strong." In

early manhood he came to Arles and thence as a hermit to the spot which now bears his name ; here he was fed with milk by a white stag which presented itself every day at the thicket in which the Saint had made his habitation. One day the stag was chased by the dogs of the king out a-hunting, and fled to the protection of St Gilles ; and the dogs dared not approach the thicket but sat round it in a circle, baying. Whereupon a huntsman who was in the King's following shot an arrow into the thicket ; and then the King dismounted and came up to it, and saw the holy man, his hand pierced by the arrow, sheltering the stag. The King was touched by the sight, and built a monastery so that St Gilles might rule over it ; but it was to his cave that the peasants used until recently to come when disaster threatened the country-side.

For many years did St Gilles rule over the monastery with a hand firm yet gentle, just yet full of mercy ; and in his old age he was commanded by Charlemagne to go to Orleans ; for the King " had heard speak of the renown of him, and impetred that he might see him, and he received him much honourably, and he prayed him to pray for him ; among other things because he had done a sin so foul and villainous that he durst not be shriven thereof to him ne to none

other. And on the Sunday after, as St Gilles said Mass and prayed for the King, the angel of Our Lord appeared to him, and laid a schedule upon the altar where the sin of the King was written in by order, and that was pardoned him by the prayer of St Gilles, so that he were thereof repentant and abstained him from doing it any more, and it was adjoined to the end that, who that required St Gilles for any sin that he had done, if he left it that it should be pardoned to him. And after the holy man delivered the schedule to the King, and he confessed his sin and required pardon humbly.”¹

It is not unlikely that the visit of St Gilles to the great Charlemagne was prompted more by the Saracen invasions then striking new terror into the heart of Provence than by command of His Majesty. In short, St Gilles fled; St Hospice did not. On the contrary, he continued his anchorite life in a tower on Cap Ferrat; and the Saracens, seeing the tower and taking for granted that it contained treasure, attacked and captured it. Their surprise may well be imagined when they found only an old man deep in con-

¹ In Germany St Gilles is reckoned among the fourteen *Nothilfer*, or ever-present helps in times of trouble; and at Valencia, in Spain, it is customary to bless a sprig of fennel on his day.

templation within its walls. But surprise soon gave way to fury ; and one of them raised his arm to strike off the Saint's head. To his horror, the arm grew stiff and the sword clattered from his now useless hand on to the stone floor. The Saracen, reports the legend, turned Christian on the spot, whereupon the strength of his arm was restored to him ; the rest died where they stood, and for centuries their spirits might be heard crying, " Hospice, why dost thou torment us ? Why do we burn ? "

The power of St Hospice—or, as he is sometimes called, St Sospes—was exercised generously after his death on behalf of all well-intentioned Christians. It is told that in the Middle Ages a Christian who was voyaging in a Jewish vessel wished to disembark at the *Iles des Lérins* ; but the captain, raising some quibble about the wind, refused and set a course that would miss the islands by many leagues. The Christian, however, had concealed in his handkerchief some dust from the tomb of St Hospice ; and when *Lérins* was reached, the vessel with all her Jewish crew would not, in spite of the wind, budge an inch until he was safely on shore.

Not strictly of Provence at all but of Embrun, in the Department of *Hautes-Alpes*, is St Marcellin, the African Bishop of that town ; yet

his popularity in Provence would make it unbecoming not to mention him here. It is told of him that one day he exhorted to courage and patience some strangers whose cart had overturned outside Embrun; in return for which they cursed him and, loading him with the contents of the broken cart, marched him ignominiously into the town. The inhabitants, in wrath at the indignity to which their bishop was put, began to stone the strangers; but their wrath was as nothing compared with the displeasure of Heaven. A whirlwind of fire descended from the skies and would utterly have consumed the impious ones, had not St Marcellin prayed with all his might for their forgiveness.

St Marcellin appears to have enjoyed a fairly eventful life. Another story of him tells of his capture by heretics and infidels, who carried him to the edge of a precipice and threatened to hurl him over unless he renounced his beliefs and threw in his lot with them. Upon his scornful refusal they actually put their threat into execution; but angels supported the courageous bishop and wafted him gently through the air to Embrun and to safety.

Around Toulon St Maur, who is said to have been of Italian origin, is one of the most powerful Saints in Paradise; and at la-Garde-Freinet is a

statue of him with a big black beard. His beard is indeed a portentous one—but on no account must you make light of it. An irreverent countryman did so once—he threw some money at the foot of the statue with the words, “Here, St Maur, take a few *sous* for the barber.” The next day the countryman’s chin became covered with boils and ulcers, sores and disfigurements of every description, so that he was a loathsome object; and only after he had shown himself to be repentant beyond all manner of doubt did St Maur allow the disfigurements to disappear.

Of the three Saints whom we have mentioned as of Roman origin, St Victor, after whom the famous abbey is named, was a soldier at Marseilles; when various and ingenious tortures had failed to make him recant, he was thrown into prison to await further torment. Here, in the darkness of his cell, Christ appeared to him, radiant and all-conquering; the guards of St Victor were converted by the vision, baptized and afterwards burned, while the Saint himself was crushed between millstones.

At Cimiez, near Nice, St Pons received his martyr’s crown at the hand of the executioner. He had previously been burned and thrown to the bears, but had each time escaped unharmed; and after execution, it is recounted, his head,

between two lighted torches, floated down the Paillon to the sea. Our main interest with St Pons, however, is a curious use to which his statue used to be put at Collobrières. When a drought lay over the country, the statue would be dipped three times in the river as an expression both of the desire for rain and of annoyance with the Saint for not having already sent it.¹

Our last Saint, St Tropez, used at one time to be Patron Saint of Pisa, in which town he met his death at the hands of the pagan soldiery of Nero. His body, however, disappeared from the place of his martyrdom; it came in a boat without oars or sails to the Golfe de St Tropez, where Christians, miraculously warned of its arrival, awaited it, hid it during times of persecution, and finally erected a church above it.²

¹ At Pernes, near Carpentras, the statue of St Gens underwent a similar immersion, and those who were devoted to him bathed in the same stream in the belief of never again catching cold. At Callian, to the west of Grasse, the statue of St Maxime, patroness of the district, is still dipped three times in a stream upon her feast day. At Graveson (Bouches-du-Rhône) the same thing used to happen to St Antoine in order to assure a good harvest; and until the middle of last century to St Agricola at Avignon.

² To the north of the Golfe, the little town of St Maxime commemorates a saint of whom nothing is known but from whom the Bishops of Grasse claim descent.

Such, at least, is the official version ; the folk of the neighbourhood have another of less orthodoxy but possibly greater truth.

At one time, they declare, there was nothing at St Tropez but a collection of fishermen's huts ; and since they thought that a church would greatly add to their social status along the coast, they set about building one.

Now having built the church, they could not decide to whom it ought to be dedicated. Every fisherman proposed a different saint ; and for a long time it looked as if no decision would be possible, so hotly did the controversy rage. But one night in a storm a ship was wrecked and her crew drowned ; and when her figurehead was washed up next morning on the beach, in it was very quickly seen the solution of the argument.

"But what shall we call him?" asked one fisherman.

"Sant Trovato—St Trouvé," suggested another ; and thus it was finally settled. The figurehead was set up in the newly erected church and in a very short time became the object of great devotion ; but in order to put the inquisitive a little off the scent, it was agreed throughout the whole village to call the saint not Trovato but Tropato—not Trouvé but Tropé.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Devil and His Disciples

§ 1

THE Devil is on familiar ground in Provence ; perhaps there is something in the character of its inhabitants—a touch of irreverence, an immoderate love of the good things of life, a hankering after stories too highly spiced for repetition among the polite—that endears him to it. But for whatever reason, he appears to love it and to dwell in it as often as he may. Near Villefranche are three caves inhabited by him ; to throw a stone in them is to cause a storm. The Roman tower at la Turbie is a favourite haunt of his. He lives in a cave near Marseilles—and in a well at Marseilles also, where, in the guise of a cook, he used to prepare food for St Mary Magdalen before she entered upon her long penance at la Sainte-Baume. The Cime du Diable, to the east of St-Martin-Vésubie (Alpes-Maritime) is another of his homes, convenient, no doubt, because of the proximity of the Laghi



Eze.

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d'Inferno which communicate direct with Hell ;¹ and at Roquebrune he lives 'on the sea-shore.

At Roquebrune, indeed, a fisherman once forbade his son to fish from the beach since it held so unpleasant a tenant. But in time the larder grew empty, and the son slunk away to try his luck at the forbidden spot ; and sure enough the Devil carried him off. He carried off also—as he was plainly entitled to do—a youth named Ambrose whom he found at St-Cassian, near by Cannes, sacrificing to heathen idols. He transported the miserable fellow through the air as far as Lérins ; but there Ambrose had the presence of mind to call upon St Honorat, and the Devil was forced to let him go ; and Ambrose came fluttering down like a frightened bird in the very middle of the cloister.

To the simple folk of the country-side Satan offers not less preposterous bargains in Provence than in other parts of the world. Both of a bridge at Eze and of the Pont du Gard it is told that he built them for a peasant who grumbled at having to negotiate so many steep hills. But a condition was imposed which gave to Satan the right to claim the first living soul that crossed the bridge ; whereupon the peasant, instead of

¹ Lakes also vomit flames at Bras and at Roquebrus-sanne.

crossing it himself as Satan had of course expected, threw a bone to the other side, so that it was the dog who raced in pursuit—and that was all the profit the Evil One made on the transaction.

Another of the Devil's tricks is to offer you riches and then to secure your person at the moment his gift lies temptingly before you. Yet in this case a little patience will outdo his cunning. Thus :

Obtain a hen absolutely black, and take it at nightfall to a cross-roads. Trace in the dust of the roadside a circle and stand in the middle of it with the hen under your arm. At midnight a black horseman muffled in a black cloak and riding a black horse (none other than Satan himself) will ride along the road toward you ; throw him the bird and cry in a bold voice :

“ Give me money for my hen.”

The horseman will catch the hen in its flight and will toss you in exchange a bag stuffed with good coin. But the bag will fall outside the circle ; it will be yours—and note this well—only if you remain without moving until the first cock-crow announces the dawn. Should your cupidity lead you to grab at the money, you will have only yourself to blame. . . .

A farmer once entered into a pact with the

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Devil that in exchange for a perpetually good crop Satan should receive his fair share. Now Satan considered his share to be nothing less than the whole; and for the first year he demanded whatever grew above the ground.

So the farmer sowed potatoes.

The second year, the Devil, chagrined at being outwitted, demanded whatever grew beneath the ground.

So the farmer sowed wheat.

The third year the pact was terminated by mutual consent.

There is no one, however, with whom Satan likes better to muse himself than with those who have devoted their lives to God. At Almanarre, near Hyères, at St Pons de Gémenos, near Marseilles, at St Julien, between Tourves and Roquebrussanne (where God turned three of the offenders into stone pillars), and at countless other monasteries and convents, past and present, he has made merry with the monks and nuns, leading them by easy and subtle steps from innocent frivolity to licence and eternal damnation. The most unprintable stories are told of these debauches and orgies—stories that make one cover one's ears and blush for very shame—and one realizes with ever-increasing conviction that no maiden is safe from his machinations, so

that her likeliest means of escape (and even that by no means a certain one) lies in early marriage, and that no man's soul is his own until he has placed it irrevocably under the protection of one of the powerful Saints of Paradise.

Readers of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* will recall the story, taken directly from a Provençal folktale, of how Satan in the guise of a peasant once tempted three nuns, who were laden with goods for the convent, to succumb to the terrible sin of swearing by offering them an ass that would move only when a certain word (one, it is hoped, quite unfamiliar to their ears) was uttered in a loud and determined voice. At first the nuns, having loaded the ass with their goods, did all in their power to induce him along the road by fair means ; but in vain. Evening was coming on, and they were unwilling either to be nightbound themselves or to leave the ass by the wayside where it might be stolen by robbers ; at last, as the result of a long confabulation, they hit upon a plan to end their troubles. They ranged themselves three deep behind the beast, and, as a preliminary, treated it to a good hard thump. Then the leading nun called out its name ; the second nun uttered the first part of the naughty word ; and the third nun the latter part. The ass began to trot cheerfully

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towards the convent ; and there was no necessity for the nuns to attend confession—on that score, at least.

In previous chapters we have heard how certain Saints repulsed attacks by the Evil One and thereby added to their sanctity. Near Ollioules is a rock on which is imprinted a large depression resembling a foot, and this depression goes by the name of the Pied de St Martin. If the story of its origin does not exactly add to the religious reputation of the great Saint, it does at least show him as a man of decision and craft to whom all was fair in war.

There was a time when the whole district was under the thumb of the Devil, who lived in the Gorges d'Ollioules and made life unbearable for honest men and women. But St Martin heard of this deplorable state of affairs and came all the way to Provence in order to right it ; and hot and dusty after his long journey, he spied at last the Devil sitting in shade and comfort astride the Gorges.

“ Well, good St Martin,” cried the Devil heartily, “ what ill wind brings you into this country of mine on such a hot day ? ”

“ You know my business very well,” replied St Martin ; and the Devil laughed politely but incredulously. And then they began to argue,

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walking up and down in spite of the heat ; and after some time they found themselves on a piece of high ground overlooking the Gorges. Then St Martin suggested that the matter could be best settled not by words but by a competition of prowess—and he put it to Satan that he who could take the three biggest strides should be master of the country. Satan, of course, readily agreed, for he knew that St Martin was not only weary but in addition quite unaccustomed to the heat of the Provençal sun.

St Martin, therefore, made his three strides, landing finally upon the spot where the impression of his foot still remains. Satan, when his turn came, made at first two such enormous leaps that St Martin, for all his unquenchable faith, felt the day lost. But just as the Arch-Fiend was about to make his third and final stride, St Martin prayed hard for that Aid which it is the privilege of all true Christians to seek—and Satan, poised like a gigantic black bird above the Gorges d'Ollioules, fell with a crash of thunder and a shower of sparks into its depths.

In Vaucluse, the *Pierre du Diable* is a rock upon the crest of a hill which overlooks *Notre-Dame-d'Aubune*, to the north of *Carpentras* ; and here it was that the Blessed Virgin intervened in the eternal warfare between Satan and the

Church. It is said that the Prince of Darkness, furious at seeing the completion of the chapel, hurled an immense rock to accomplish its destruction at one blow. But Our Lady arrested it in mid-air just as it was about to fall; and the hill on which it now finds itself has grown up so that the rock should no longer weigh heavily upon those spotless hands.

There have naturally been various attempts at capturing the Devil and putting an end to him. One attempt took place when he was in residence at the Cime du Diable. An enthusiastic young priest from the village of Belvédère, supported by all the men of the neighbourhood, made his way to the Laghi d'Inferno and called upon Satan to emerge from its depths. No sooner had Satan done so than he found himself sprinkled with holy water—a most unpleasant experience for him. He therefore scrambled out on the other side of the lake and, with characteristic duplicity, promised to betake himself to a far country and never to return to Provence. As if to prepare for immediate departure he called out all his followers; and from every quarter of the earth, air and water they obeyed his summons. So many were there, however, and so incredibly hideous was their appearance that the worthy villagers were seized with panic and, headed by

the enthusiastic young priest, pelted down the hillside to the safety of their own homes !

More successful was a peasant of Contes, to the north of Nice. This peasant, impersonating the soul of a notorious drunkard recently deceased, mounted his donkey and made for the spot in the Paillon valley where Satan had for the time being taken up his abode. Satan, waiting for him in the dark night, gripped what he fondly imagined was the soul of the drunkard ; but the peasant had armed himself with a pot of birdlime in which the Devil became hopelessly entangled. Whereupon the peasant slipped a halter round his neck, made the sign of the Cross upon its double knot and fastened it securely to a great jut of rock near at hand. And there the Devil—although you might not think so—has remained in captivity ever since.

§ 2

If the Provençal occasionally permits himself to take Satan with, as it were, a pinch of salt, however small, he has nothing but solemnity and awe for ghosts and spirits. In ghosts especially he believes not merely theoretically but in the most practical fashion. A usual form of greeting from a peasant is “ Bounjour, Mousu, la Coumpagnio ” (*Bonjour, Monsieur, la Com-*

pagnie). The Company refers in the peasant's mind both to the Guardian Angel of the person—whether friend, acquaintance or stranger—whom he may be addressing, and also, and far more powerfully, to all those other invisible beings who invariably accompany him and who, if they are to prove innocuous, must be treated with respect.

Every village, town and even city has its haunted houses—sometimes scores of them—which the simpler folk will always avoid passing, and into whose windows they will not dare to look. In the country, farms and fields are haunted by former owners or by ghosts of unknown persons who work for good or for evil. Dangerous it is for mortal to interfere with them; for they have come, often enough, to carry out some worthy task allotted to them beyond the grave—to issue a warning of fate, to obtain honourable burial, to expiate a sin, to announce the position of hidden wealth, to avenge a wrong received before death.

Ghosts of friends or relatives make their presence felt in many ways, especially at the moment of their earthly passing. The story is told of a couple who searched the house through and through for a cricket that appeared to sing now in one room now in another; only later

did they discover that what they had supposed a cricket was in reality the soul of their aunt who had passed away at the moment of the mysterious chirping. An old mother sitting in her cottage near Toulon was startled by a sudden thud against the door, as if some one had dropped a sack of earth—it was the soul of her son warning her of his death. Spirits who return to beg human consideration and commiseration for their mortal remains do so ordinarily either by words or by gestures; but sometimes their wishes are indicated in more forceful if less obvious manner.

A woman at Toulon fell in love with a workman from Lorient, in Brittany, who had come to work in the town; but before they could be married he fell ill with fever and died. On the day of his funeral the woman set out with a handsome wreath to lay on his grave; but a terrific storm of rain prevented her from reaching the cemetery. That night her sleep was disturbed by groans and cries outside her door; thinking them to come from a neighbour who had been taken ill she left the room to offer assistance. No sooner had she done so than she felt herself violently embraced, and then with appalling clarity she heard the clatter of a body falling downstairs; but when in terror she made frantic

efforts to open her door, she found it held firmly against her. Almost dead with panic, she was compelled to spend the rest of the night on the landing. The next day she hastened to the cemetery and placed the wreath on her sweetheart's grave ; and as proof that it was he who had thus importuned her, she was never disturbed by him again.

Sometimes the soul returns to complete an act left unfinished at death. This was what happened to a *curé* in one of those tales which old wives of both sexes still love to tell : his ghost returned every night to the church in order to complete a Mass which sudden death had interrupted ; but never could he find a server. At last the little son of the beadle, who had several times seen the apparition and who had overcome his natural fears, offered himself in that capacity. His offer was accepted, and at the conclusion of the Mass the *curé* smiled upon the lad and disappeared.

But according to another version of the tale, the *curé* warned the boy against performing a certain act at a certain moment of the ritual. The boy forgot the injunction ; and the next moment he saw before him not the kindly ghost of the old priest but a skeleton, grinning and hideous.

A less unpleasant experience was that of a washerwoman of Cavalaire (Var). As she washed one night, the lamp suddenly went out; she relit it, but again it was extinguished. After several more unsuccessful attempts to make it burn steadily, she grew afraid.

“If you are a good spirit,” she cried tremulously, “speak; if not, leave me in peace.”

For a few seconds there was silence; and then she heard through the darkness a slow and solemn voice—more like a breath of wind than a voice—saying:

“Break down the third stair in the stone staircase outside your house.”

The rest of the night was undisturbed; but as soon as daylight appeared the good woman did as the spirit had bidden her. To her surprise—and delight—she found in the rubble-work a sum of money sufficient to keep her in comfort for the rest of her days.

Those souls who return for vengeance are apt to behave in a manner entirely terrestrial. In a village near Barcelonnette a widower once married again, evidently before his first wife considered a suitable interval to have elapsed. At any rate, she appeared one night as the couple were in bed and, while ignoring the husband, set herself to bite, scratch, punch and kick the

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second wife until the poor woman was black and blue all over.

But if ghosts sometimes resort to extreme measures with human beings, the spirits called *Armettos* (Little Souls), which take up their lodging in inhabited houses, are gentle and helpful to their hosts—as long, that is, as their hosts treat them with reasonable kindness. On cold nights they appreciate a spark of fire left on the hearth after the human beings have gone to bed ; and the table-cloth should not be cleared away after the evening meal, so that the *Armettos* may share the crumbs that remain. Only one precaution is necessary—to ensure that the four corners of the cloth do not touch the ground, lest evil spirits climb up and not only spoil any food that may have been left on the table but drive the Little Souls right away from the house. In the morning the crumbs must be carefully collected and thrown either on to the roof or into a field ; in either place they bring good fortune and abundance.

Not so long ago, an old woman living in a village near Toulon found her home inhabited by a number of *Armettos* with a mania for tidiness. Whatever had cluttered the room at night was tidied in the morning ; the floor was scrubbed and the donkey's manger filled. For a long time

the old woman was very well content to let matters rest where they were ; but at last, urged thereto by the people of the village, she went for advice to the priest. The Armettos, of course, are not encouraged by the Church.

“Strew beans over the floor of your room,” ordered the priest. “Rather than pick them up the Armettos will leave the house.”

The old woman did as she was told ; but in the morning the beans had been tidied and put into a bag of paper.

“Strew peas on the floor of your room,” ordered the priest ; and the old woman did so. In the morning there was a neat little pile of peas on the table.

“Strew *mérévillons* over the floor of your room,” ordered the priest ; *mérévillons* are a kind of very small lentils.

This time the plan succeeded. Next morning the *mérévillons* were still scattered over the floor, and rather than pick them up the Armettos never again set foot inside the house.

But in her heart the old woman was sorry she had mentioned the matter to the priest. For one cannot say that housekeeping is primarily a priest's business.

Through the blank windows of the Château de Maubelle, near Hyères, one may sometimes

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catch sight in the moonbeams of dainty little ladies combing their hair, playing musical instruments or dancing. They go by the name of Damettos and are often regarded as protecting the family of him who is lucky enough to spy them without being in his turn seen by them. At Toulon, on the other hand, is the *Homme-fé* whose sole amusement lies in frightening small urchins who pass through his quarter of the town after nightfall.

Of course, the house is not the only place in which sprites and fairies dwell and amuse themselves. The red rocks of the *Estérel* are named, one is taught to believe, after a fairy more beautiful than human being can conceive, who lives in a fountain near *le Trayas*, a draught from which brings magic dreams to the drinker ; while he who is fortunate enough to be kissed by the damsel forgets all else in his desire to follow her to the ends of the earth.¹ In the fields of the *Bouches-du-Rhône* dwell *Fantasti*, imps who, as their name implies, delight to play eccentric but harmless tricks upon peasants and shepherds. Their attention is chiefly occupied, however, with animals ; if one beast in a herd or flock is more skittish than the rest, it is said that the

¹ She is seen also in the district between *Carpentras* and *Luberon*.

Fantasti have taken a liking to it—that they have been attracted by the bell round its neck, which has made them laugh so much that they were unable to resist playing with the wearer. But in the Rhône—and notably at Arles and Beaucaire—live beings of a very different sort.

In these days the memory of the Dracs is fast disappearing, and only one or two are now supposed to survive—almost certainly, the tourist steamboat service up and down the river has proved a shock from which any sensitive sprite would find it hard to recover.¹ They used, according to medieval writers, to tempt women, and less often children, by whirling golden rings and jewels or sparkling toys upon the surface of the water. Human beings who fell into their clutches they devoured, preserving only a small quantity of fat; and a few women would be put to the task of wet-nursing their children. Very occasionally they would allow a victim to

¹ A suggestive folktale is told in Gard. At one time, it was said, the fairies could handle rocks as if they were as light as pebbles, throwing them hither and thither in never-ending sport. But gradually the fairies felt the power of their magic waning and the stones growing heavier. And they said to themselves, "Hurry, hurry! Let us play while we can. The stones grow heavier and heavier every time, and when we can no longer throw them as we used to do, men will no longer believe in us."

return to earth ; but before doing so they would deprive him of the power of seeing Dracs for ever afterwards by smearing upon his eyes the fat they had saved from previous victims, which had been in the meantime endowed by them with magical virtues.

§ 3

It sometimes happens that the imagination of the common folk fastens itself upon an historical personage and turns him into a veritable wonder-worker ; in this process the folk of Provence are no exceptions. Though they have passed over the edifying picture of Pope John XXIII at Avignon, pledging all his possessions to the Countess de Foix in exchange for a serpent's horn—an infallible safeguard against witchcraft—and the picture also of their beloved Queen Jeanne being acquitted of the murder of her husband on the plea (made by the judges themselves) that, if she were indeed guilty, it was through no fault of her own but rather due to her possession by evil spirits—though these and other choice incidents in the history of their province they have ignored, they have seized upon the life of a sixteenth-century astrologer and converted Jew in order to weave round it stories the most fantastic and entertaining.

Born at St-Rémy in 1503, Nostradamus,¹ or Notredame, was in his early years a doctor who first made his name during a plague at Aix, when he invented a powder, *pour chasser les odeurs pestilentiellles*. He gave up medicine, however, to devote himself to his favourite science—or pseudo-science—of astrology, living most of his life at Salon, where his tomb still receives the half-ashamed visits of occasional pilgrims labouring under a grievance or anxious for the future. He cast the horoscopes of the children of Catherine de Medici, and the horoscope of a young Prince of Béarn, who, he predicted, would become one of the great kings of the earth—and who became Henri IV. He also foretold a war, to take place three hundred and sixty years after the year 1555, which would make Europe tremble to its foundations, in which no nation would be conqueror although all the nations of the earth would take part. The chief actors, he declared, would be an Emperor from the Land of the Bear and two Emperors from the Lands of the Double-headed Eagles; these three would make rivers of blood to flow, and their soldiers were to fight “in the air, under the sea and under the earth.” Altogether a promising essay in the art of prophecy, the error of one year in the date

¹ The famous historian of Provence was his brother.

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of our Armageddon being the only palpable blunder.

But it was not great flights of imagination that impressed the Provençal mind ; a quick return for its belief was what it chiefly demanded. The Governor of Tenda (just across the Italian border) consulted Nostradamus before making a journey, although taking care to explain that he did not believe in the stars. After a prolonged consultation, Nostradamus contented himself with saying that his client would drink too much ; whereat the Governor, who was well-known for his sobriety, laughed loud and long and sent the astrologer packing. In crossing the Durance, however, the sober Governor was thrown out of the boat and all but drowned ; and on being dragged to the bank had to suffer water to pour from his mouth for twenty minutes.

Thus did the astrologer's prophecy come true.

Among other stories that cling to the name of Nostradamus is one concerning the waywardness of his daughter. When a young man came to demand her hand in marriage, the father foretold that after a year of married life, her desires would overcome her reason and seven times she would break her vows. The young man married her nevertheless, and, thanks to the warnings of

his father-in-law, was able each time to impersonate her supposed lover.

In affairs of love, indeed, Nostradamus appears to have been an expert. It is told of him that, in his extreme old age, when he was practically blind (actually he died in his sixty-fourth year), he was sitting one evening outside his door; and as he sat there a girl passed him.

"Good day, Mousu Notredame," she called.

"Good day, girl," replied the astrologer.

A quarter of an hour later the girl passed again, but in the opposite direction.

"Good day, Mousu Notredame," she called.

"Good day, woman," replied the astrologer.

His profound knowledge of magic, avers the story, enabled him to detect, without any word being uttered, the fundamental change wrought in the girl during the quarter of an hour spent with an ardent wooer.

Yet another tale concerning him tells that he predicted for his son a rope of seven cords. When this strange prediction became known there was much pursing of lips and clucking of tongues, for it was naturally inferred that the boy would end his life on the gallows. In due course, however, he became a Capuchin monk, wearing the seven-corded rope of that Order round his waist.

Whence came the marvellous power that enabled Nostradamus to make prophecies so accurate that they raised the hair on men's heads? Modern psychology might be ready enough to expound its theories, but to the Provençal peasant there could be but one answer: from the Devil. And because the Devil grants nothing except as the result of a hard-made bargain, it was generally declared that Nostradamus had agreed to render after death his then useless body, whether it be buried inside a church or not. That is why, declare the Provençal folk with a chuckle, he was buried in the wall of the sacristy: he was neither inside the church nor outside, and once again the Devil was cheated of his due.

§ 4

Just as the Provençal mind is quick to conjure up ghosts, so also is it filled with notions of witches, or Masques. Yet should you ask a Provençal exactly what are Masques he will be at a loss to answer you. They are simply *dé gens què fau de maou*—those who do harm. If a child is healthy and happy they strike it with a wasting disease; if a household is contented they bring misery to it; if a man's affairs prosper they take care that penury shall follow. The range of their power seems illimitable; human

beings, animals, foods, tools, the earth itself can be *enmasqué*; and there are but few people—known as *démasquaires*—who possess the art of counteracting the spells which Masques cast with such prodigality.

Masques may be either spirits or human beings; to generalize from the available stories and traditions concerning them, they are usually the latter, and the term has become practically synonymous with that of Witch. Nevertheless, the Cholera Masque of Aups (Var) seems to belong purely to the phantom world. He is a tall lean man who is seen after nightfall plunging his hand into a bag upon his hip and scattering invisible seed; and always after he has appeared cholera breaks out in Provence. Even when they are known to be human beings, Masques can take on the forms of animals; there is a story of one who habitually became a peacock, and others horses, dogs and wolves. Along the course of the Gapeau, the valley of Collobrières, and the banks of the Carami, Argens, Issole, Loup and Var, are whispered stories of Masques who become washerwomen seen either singly or in groups, and who by singing and laughing try to attract the attention of the belated pedestrian. Having succeeded in so doing, they draw him into a dance which utterly exhausts him, or

throw him into the water, or change themselves into terrible monsters which maul him and leave him half dead upon the roadside.

Near Cagnes, in the Alpes-Maritimes, the village of St-Jeannet is declared to be inhabited entirely by Masques. Here, it is said, the Knights Templars once held sway; and the secrets which they left, at first jealously guarded, have since become the common property of the village and have thus enabled its people to league themselves with the Powers of Evil. In Provence, as in all other Christian countries, the slightest lapse from religious orthodoxy was at one time sufficient for a popular charge of witchcraft.

It is not usual, however, for Masques to be found in so wholesale a fashion as at St-Jeannet; ordinarily they are more isolated in their habitations and restricted in their devilry. In the district near Toulon, for example, there is a Masque who brings rain on a wash day, another who brings rain on a fête day, a third who rots the grain as it is sown, and a fourth who causes storms. But outside these particular duties or privileges the Masque is apparently harmless.

Along the Riviera coast Masques are said to assemble beneath a carob, or locust, tree—the tree, that is, whose fruit, according to tradition, formed the locust food of St John the Baptist in

the wilderness and the husks which the Prodigal Son shared with the swine—and from its shade departed for the Sabbath. But if no carob tree is at hand, a nut tree or, still better, a boat is frequently substituted. At Menton the tale is told of a fisherman who, asleep one night in his boat, was awakened by the arrival of a party of six Masques who chanted, “Away for six, away for seven.” The boat did not, however, as they had expected, move, because of the unseen fisherman in it. So the Masques held a consultation, and, having decided that one of them must be with child, they chanted, “Away for seven, away for eight.”

Thereupon the boat sped through the air all the way to Milan, where the Masques danced and performed the sacrilegious rites of the Sabbath; the fisherman, meanwhile, had sufficiently recovered from his fear to pluck not merely a leaf from a tree by which he might identify the place at which he found himself, but also a strip of stuff from the skirt of one of the Masques. The Sabbath over, the Masques, by repeating the charm, made the boat return to Menton; but what horrified the fisherman most was the discovery that the stuff he had torn from the skirt of the Masque belonged to none other than his sweetheart. However, to cut a long story

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short, he married her, and in consideration of his continued silence she made him rich for life.

The Sabbath inadvertently attended by the fisherman must have been one of unusual importance ; for Sabbaths were generally held at the nearest cross-roads. Towards midnight, according to the folk of the country-side, little twinkling lights are seen ; and out of the darkness emerge the shadowy forms of birds and animals. Sometimes a human being appears and without warning changes into a beast. Rapidly the assembly grows larger and larger ; man talks with pig, dog with wolf and toad with owl. Then a silence falls : the Devil arrives—a buck, a cat, a man robed in black. All bow before him and crowd to kiss some part or other of his person. A diabolical mass is said, a feast is held, an orgy of debauch and licentiousness follows ; and at the first crow of the cock the Sabbath vanishes.

It is interesting in discussing the Sabbath to recall certain evidence given in the year 1611 during the trial at Aix of a priest of Marseilles named Louis Gaufredy, accused of witchcraft and burned alive. Louis was “ Lucifers lieftenant ” and the vow he made upon becoming a Masque was cited in full :

“Ie Louys Gaufredy renonce à tous les biens tant spirituels que corporels qui me pourroyent estre conferez de la part de Dieu, de la vierge Marie & de tous les Saints de Paradis, pareillement de mon patron S. Iean Baptiste, S. Pierre, S. Paul, & S. François, et de me donner de corps & d’ame à Lucifer icy present avec tous les biens que ie feray a iamais : excepte la valeur du Sacrement pour le regard de ceux qui le recevront : Et ainsi le signe et atteste.”

In addition, we are told in books of the period which quote the trial, to a sort of mock Mass—in which all the praise rightly bestowed upon the Almighty is transferred to the Devil—and dancing to the sound of viols and other instruments, “they provide” at the Sabbath “a banquet, setting three tables according to the three diversities of the people above named. They that haue the charge of bread, doe bring in bread made of corne. The drink which they haue is Malmsey. The meate they ordinarily eate is the flesh of young children, which they cooke and make ready in the Synagogue, sometimes bringing them thither aliue by stealing them from those houses where they haue opportunity to come. They haue no vse of kniues at table for feare least they should be laid a crosse. They have also no salt.”

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The “three diuersities” of Masques are as follows :

“First the hagges and witches, who are people of a sordid and base condition, are the first that come to adore the Prince of the Synagogue, who is Lucifers lieftenant, and he that now holdeth that place is Lewes Gaufridy : then they adore the Princesse of the Synagogue who is a woman placed at his right hand. Next they goe and worship the Deuill who is seated on a Throne like a Prince. In the second place come the Sorcerers and the Sorceresses, who are people of a middle condition, and these performe the same kind of adoration with the former, kneeling vpon the ground, but not prostrating themselves as doe the other ; although they kiss the hands and feet of the Deuill as the first likewise doe. In the third place come the Magicians who are Gentlemen and people of a higher rank.”

But repulsive though they may be to honest men and women, it sometimes happens that Masques, like thieves, fall out among themselves. Then it is that we may legitimately laugh at them. Once upon a time on the Crau, a shepherd was tending his flock when a cart came by. The driver gave the sheep a peculiar look, and they straightway began to gambol and leap into the air and run to and fro, and in general to play such

giddy tricks that the dogs were at a loss to keep them in order. The shepherd, divining the cause of the phenomenon, ran after the cart, which was still in sight, and begged the driver to remove the spell he had put upon the flock ; but the driver refused. Whereupon the shepherd gave the horse a peculiar look ; and although the driver whipped it and shouted at it and even, descending from his seat, tried to pull it, the horse could not budge an inch. Finally the two Masques each pronounced some mysterious words and the spells were removed.

The *démasquaire*—the person who has it in his power to counteract the spells of Masques—seldom, it seems, himself performs the necessary act ; generally his part is to offer advice. A story is told of a girl near Hyères who, in addition to wasting away in a manner entirely inexplicable, was assailed each night by the most violent and terrible of dreams. Things came to such a pass that her mother consulted a *démasquaire*.

“Go to her bed,” said the omniscient personage, “and take from it whatever you find there.”

The mother searched and found in her daughter’s bed a curious string with knots as large as the handle of a big knife—one of those strange but familiar instruments used by Masques to tie the girl’s mind and body into knots similar to those

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of the cord. The mother hurried it away and, having made the sign of the Cross over it, buried it deeply in the ground ; and her daughter never dreamed again but recovered her strength and beauty.¹

Another story concerns a peasant who, after an encounter with a Masque, bore a child with eyes twice the normal size. One pilgrimage after another the good woman attended, but all to no purpose ; her child's eyes, far from becoming smaller, grew larger and larger. At last, when she was on the verge of despair, she met a very wise *démasquaire* who told her to buy three handfuls of nails that had not been weighed by the shopkeeper, and to boil them in a room with three beds until all the water had disappeared into steam. The peasant obeyed the instructions ; the water boiled away and the nails, leaping into

¹ The Provençal attaches the greatest importance to dreams and often orders his acts by what they tell him. Dreams can be influenced by the way one undresses : to leave one's garments lying about the room is to court a thoroughly unpleasant night with dreams of robbers. To place one's stockings at the end of the bed is to dream of being pursued. To put one's shoes under the head of the bed is to dream of falling over a precipice ; stockings and shoes should always be in the farthest corner of the room. If one wakes up with a dream unfinished, it is the very worst possible luck to speculate upon its termination until after lunch.

the air, set fire to the two beds but spared the one over which hung a picture of St Barbe ; and marvellous to relate, from that moment the child's eyes began to improve until finally they were normal and healthy.

But even without recourse to *démasquaires*, the ordinary man or woman can achieve something, however little, in warding off the evil of Masques. One of the simplest and most effective methods is to wear one stocking—preferably the left—inside out ; and a house may be protected by hanging St John's wort or hellebore above the door, by scattering salt on the threshold, or by placing in a conspicuous position two pins in the form of a cross. And a Masque may, of course, be immediately recognized from the fact that he or she is unable to pass over running water but must make a *détour* to avoid it.

Very closely associated with Masques are werwolves ; a Provençal saying warns us, in this connection, against all folk whose eyebrows meet. Except in a few isolated parts of the province the tradition of werwolves is practically dead ; yet at the end of last century Brignoles was sent into a panic by tales of one that had been seen in the neighbourhood. The stories became not only more and more terrifying but more and more circumstantial ; until a highly-placed official of the

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Republic issued a decree that anyone setting eyes upon the beast would be immediately arrested. Strangely enough, it disappeared the very day the decree was issued.



Gourdon.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Earth and its Gifts

§ I

THEY will tell you in the Alpes-Maritimes that the earth is floating upon the waters of an immense ocean, like a ship ; and elsewhere, that it rests upon gigantic pillars. But whether it be galleon or palace, it is assuredly filled with so goodly a variety that the wits of the Provençal are set a-spinning and his imagination can scarcely keep pace with them. Certainly, if his folklore concerning the earth and its gifts does not appear as rich and abundant as that of, for instance, Brittany, it is by no means because its surprises are lost upon him ; rather is it due to the circumstance of his having lived in so busy a thoroughfare of civilization that little opportunity of peaceful contemplation has come his way.

Nevertheless, there are obvious features of the world about him over which he could not help pondering for himself and about which he has learned much also from those who, at one time or

another, have occupied or travelled through his land. The desolation of the Crau, for example, is so striking that if he did not evolve its legend for himself he readily accepted that of others and adopted it for his own. That legend tells how Hercules determined to fight two giants, Albion and Ligur (some say Bergion), sons of Neptune, who lived in what was at that time a garden and overawed the country-side. Hercules shot arrow after arrow, but without in the least harming the ferocious pair; and at last all his arrows were spent—and his strength with them. Then the two giants came at him, and it would have gone hard with him had not Jupiter caused a violent wind called the Mistral to blow from the north; and the Mistral filled the sky with dark clouds, and from the clouds came a hail of stones which covered the whole landscape and which so battered the two giants that they were forced to loose their hold on Hercules in order to shield themselves. At the same time Jupiter sent to Hercules a new accession of strength, so that he was able to pick up handfuls of the stones and to hurl them with such force and direction that the giants were soon dead.

Then in a loud voice Hercules called out across the stony wastes of the Crau that men might come out of the caves and places in which they had

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hidden from fear of the giants ; and he taught them how to cultivate the fields and grow vegetables, how to band themselves into cities which they might defend against robbers and brigands. And as for Hercules himself, he married a Provençal maiden and settled down in the country for the rest of his life.

Belated travellers on the Crau are often met by those who have the air of peasants offering to show them the way. But they are evil spirits and will only mislead ; and, in fact, it is unwise to answer any greeting after sundown, lest it come from a Matagot, or Matagon, one of those mysterious occupants of the fields and earth who, neither good enough to be angels nor bad enough to be devils, have become mischievous to human beings since the days when towns encroached upon agricultural lands and less corn was grown. Usually they appear as cats, sometimes they appear as men or women, at others as horses, dogs, sheep or goats ; and their chief characteristic is that they move with incredible rapidity from place to place, so that it is useless to attempt flight from them. Only by their blazing eyes may they be seen, or by a pale luminosity which emanates from their bodies ; and the traveller must cover his eyes and recite a *Paternoster* and, calling upon his Saints, hurry

through the darkness to the safety of a lighted cottage.

Hercules was by no means the only hero of olden time to play his part in Provençal folklore. Near Cuers,¹ in the Maures, there used to be seen an immense worn slab of stone, perhaps natural, perhaps of Druidical origin, of which it was told that Samson, playing quoits against a giant called Pèse-Montagne, threw it for a distance of eight kilometres on exactly the spot he had intended: the quoit of the giant may still be seen some distance away. It is, in fact, the only one which now remains, for the Palet de Samson came to an inglorious end when it took its place among the stones used in building the Casino at Hyères.

Stones are employed sometimes, however, for the more laudable object of keeping the soul of a dead person at rest. Scattered up and down the Alpes-Maritimes may be seen cairns by the roadside, believed always to be the grave of a woman who met her death by violence and whose soul must therefore be protected against its own thirst for vengeance. Each passer-by adds one stone to these cairns, conscious that should he neglect to do so he would die within the year. There is a conspicuous *clapier dé frèmo mouorto* at Caussols, near Grasse, and until very recently there stood

¹ The same story is told near Draguignan.

one at Martigues (Bouches-du-Rhône) ; while of another at Entrevaux (Basses-Alpes) it is said that it commemorates a robber who, on his way to carry off a hermit in a sack and drown him, fell dead by the roadside—struck, of course, by the wrath of Heaven.

By the wayside also may be seen, in a good many districts of Provence, stone pillars about a yard square at the base and four yards high, surmounted by a pyramid which in its turn may or may not terminate in a cross. On one of the faces of these columns is a niche containing a statue of the Virgin or of a Saint ; and often there is carving of a miscellaneous character on the remaining faces. In springtime the niches are filled with flowers deposited there by the devout ; and sometimes a cypress has been planted beside these pillars—or Pylons, as they are called. At la Sainte-Baume is a famous Grotte du Saint Pilon (where, says tradition, St Mary Magdalen used to be carried to prayer by angels) ; and near St-Maximin, on the junction of the road from St-Maximin to St-Zachérie with that from Rougiers, is another. This latter, dating probably from the Renaissance, depicts St Mary Magdalen, clothed only in the wealth of her hair, being carried by four angels to the Church of St Maximin, where, according to the

legend, she was buried. Other carving on the pillar has become so worn that it is almost indecipherable; it may represent a monk and nun of the Order to which the Sainte-Baume belonged at the time the Pilon was erected, or it may be a Count and Countess of Provence. Near Grasse there is also a Col du Pilon.

Now the interest of these Pilon lies in the suggestion that has been made, and is now I think generally accepted, that they are the relics of a primitive cult worshipping the generative forces of Nature. In Roman times the phallic symbols erected by these early worshippers became the bases of statues of such Roman gods as were specially favourable to travellers, soldiers and all who were likely to pass along the road; it may have been also that their generative significance was not wholly overlooked. The early Catholic Church, striving to establish itself in a hostile land, saw and seized its opportunity of utilizing the Pilon—on which men had come by long-engrained habit to look in passing—to effect both advertisement of the True Faith for the benefit of those who hesitated and peaceful permeation in the hearts of those who had, willingly or unwillingly, adopted it. In short, these Pilon—Christianized symbols of heathenism—afford yet another example of that age-long

spirit of religious compromise which, though it may at any given period have much to recommend it, kills in the end all that is noblest in the very faith it would preserve.

But it is easier to adapt than to eradicate ; and the key to a good deal of that part of the folklore of Provence (as, of course, elsewhere) which concerns the earth lies in a worship of Nature's life-giving forces, which are thought to lie especially in stones, fountains and trees. On the local feast-day at Bauduen, between Aups and Fontaine l'Eveque, and also at St-Ours (Hautes-Alpes), girls wishing to marry within the year remove a portion of their clothing and slide down a sloping rock behind the church ; this practice, known as the *escourencho*—freely translated as the slippery path—has, however, now fallen into desuetude. At Hyères, on the other hand, the custom has been modified ; a bouquet of myrtle is placed at the top of a certain sloping stone and left there for a week. If by then it has slipped to the bottom, the girl who placed it must remain single for at least a year.

Near Barjols is the village of Varages, which has for its Patron Saint a certain St Foutin, or St Faustin.¹ Officially he is said to have been

¹ Veneration of St Foutin is found also as far north as Auxerre in the Department of Yonne.

first Bishop of Lyons ; but when his cult is examined more closely it seems to resolve itself into a remnant of primitive phallic worship. Up to the beginning of last century it was customary to deposit round his altar *ex-votos* in the form of models of the sexual organs ; and to-day even he is credited with the power of removing sterility from women and of raising the ardour of husbands, and his shrine is the object of many a furtive pilgrimage.

But to assure the due rewards of marriage recourse need not be had to St Foutin ; there are many springs and fountains which will serve the same purpose. One at Cotignac used to be thought to cure impotence, while others—such as those at la Sainte-Baume, Sainte-Baume-de-l'Esterel, and in the Grotte de St Cyr at Puy-loubiers (Var)—will cure disability on the part of the wife. All these fountains will also ensure an early marriage ; at Carqueiranne, between Toulon and Hyères, one has only to drink a cup from that of St Salvadour ; at Apt, to dip one's left foot in a fountain which any maiden, should you ask her discreetly, will point out to you ; while to drink from a certain spring near Ollioules is also to ensure living all one's married life in the neighbourhood.

At the Chartreuse de Montrieux is a spring

which flows into two basins placed one above the other and joined by a conduit down which the water slides with great rapidity. Girls still practise the custom of throwing a leaf at Whitsuntide into the upper basin ; if it is carried without obstruction into the lower, they declare that they will marry within the year, but if it catches on the sides of basin or conduit, that they must remain single for at least seven years.

In Provence, as in all parts of France, there is an enormous number of springs and fountains supposed to possess therapeutic properties. To recite a list of them would become wearisome in the extreme, alike to vigorous holiday-makers, to languid *hivernants*, and to those who have been ordered Provençal sunshine by omniscient Harley Street. The ones that are best known are at la Sainte-Baume and St-Catherine (near Solliès-Pont), which cure eye troubles ;¹ the fountain of St Arnoud in the Gorges du Loup (Alpes-Maritimes) which heals skin diseases ; that of St Gens, near Pernes (Vaucluse), and the water of the Étang de Berre, on St John's Day, which are infallible remedies for fevers of all kinds. It is said that at one time there was at Pernes a second fountain which ran wine ; but as the piety

¹ Also the water which at full moon is supposed to fill the tomb of St Concorde, in the Aliscamps of Arles.

of the district waned so did the fountain yield less and less. Finally it dried up entirely. It is also said of a fountain at St-Auban, near Grasse, that it flows only if a bad harvest is in store.

To cross running water with toothache is to run the risk of catching erysipelas, according to a widely held tradition in the Alpes-Maritimes; but St Veran was able to traverse the Sorgue at Vaucluse not only scatheless but dry-foot because of his miraculous cloak, and a sorceress used at one time to walk upon the Rhône, submerging herself when the name of Jesus was pronounced. Until modern times there was a prejudice against crossing the Rhône in any but a consecrated boat containing a vessel of holy water. Boats were blessed every January; if a passenger were "drawn out" by evil spirits or fell into the river from its shelter, the boat would be repainted and re-consecrated before further use. Both dragons and Dracs were considered harmless against boats thus blessed by the priest unless anyone on board harboured evil thoughts, when they would effect an invisible entry and carry him to the depths of the river.

Ferry-men on the Rhône bore for many centuries a reputation for extortion beyond that of other men—it was, in part at least, to circumvent them that the Frères Pontives (with whom St

Bénézet of Avignon is popularly associated) are said to have been formed. But the bridges they built were few in number, and ferries perforce continued to be the commonest means of effecting a crossing.

One day, runs a folktale, dwellers by the river were startled to see a boat containing what appeared to be an immense human torch swirling its way down the stream. They learned afterwards its even more startling explanation. Higher up the Rhône, a certain ferryman was in the habit of demanding, over and above his already excessive fee, a kiss from every woman he carried across. When, therefore, a figure draped in black entered his boat and sunk weeping on its bench, he promised himself an entertaining few minutes with the pretty young widow; he rowed out into mid-stream and then, taking her in his arms, proceeded to his usual overtures. But suddenly the robe flew apart, and the horrified ferryman saw that what he had imagined a defenceless woman was in reality none other than Satan.

“It will not be you who embrace me,” cried the Prince of Darkness, “but I who embrace you.”

Whereupon Satan wrapped the ferryman in his cloak, which immediately burst into flame; and locked together in a fiery embrace from

which there was no escape, they sped down the Rhône past Avignon, Tarascon, Arles and out into the ocean, where the last that was seen of them was a point of brilliant flame on the horizon.

But in spite of such evil communications, the Rhône does not appear wholly to have lost its good manners ; it can upon occasion behave with reverence and even piety. For once, when it was in flood, the Confraternity of the Grey Penitents at Avignon hastened to their chapel near its banks in fear and trembling lest they should find the whole costly building awash. And flooded, indeed, the chapel was ; but the river had built a wall of water round the altar, and while everything else was floating to and fro the holy table remained dry and safe.

It was indirectly to a flood that the little river Carami owes its name. A legend tells how a gypsy family encamped by its banks was overwhelmed by the rush of its waters ; all were drowned except the man, and he in his sorrow wandered distractedly up the river, calling after his wife.

" *O cara mia !* " he cried in vain ; and so persistently did he cry the words that the inhabitants thereabouts decided to name the river Carami.

THE EARTH AND ITS GIFTS

Now, adds the story, it happened that one of them beckoned the gypsy to him and, with every intention of sympathy, pointed out the waste of time, opportunity and energy involved in searching up-stream when the flood must obviously have carried the wife down towards the confluence with the Issole. But the gypsy shook his head and continued in the same direction.

“You didn’t know my wife,” he murmured sadly.

§ 2

It is still the fashion in Provence to plant a tree outside one’s house or in the neighbourhood of a church on May Day, to deck it with flowers and ribbons, to rejoice round it and to give it careful attention throughout the month. On May Night also it is customary in many districts to hang bouquets of flowers or branches of trees outside the windows of young girls. A perfectly well understood language has grown up about these floral offerings—rose, jasmin or orange signify sympathy ; thorns indicate spitefulness or bad temper arising out of love affairs ; a branch of fig means that the expected lover has not the smallest intention of presenting himself.

On May Day, too, there is still practised at Luc, in Var, a curious rite in which an olive tree

is involved ; similar rites are practised at Collobrières and at Aix. After the May Day dances, a girl's partner will conduct her to a certain olive tree (at Collobrières it is a chestnut) and gently push her against it three times. This is thought to ensure an early and successful marriage or, if the girl be already married, the blessing of a large family.

It is said at Menton that in the nut tree are concealed the golden slippers and luminous robe of a fairy ; and it is generally believed that a woman finding a double nut will be rewarded with twins ; while to eat roast chestnuts and to place some beneath the pillow on All Souls' Eve is to ward off the unpleasant attention of ghosts. At Marseilles it is thought that to carry a nut in one's waistcoat pocket is a safeguard against lightning and also against piles.

Corns may be cured in the Alpes-Maritimes by the simple expedient of tying a knot in a sprig of genista ; but in the same district to offer a bride a sprig of jasmin is to encompass her death within the year. To eat unripe pears is to be attacked by lice ; but an apple may be put to good use by a wronged person—so at least they say in the Bouches-du-Rhône—if he cover it with pins and thus, by pressing them slowly and firmly towards the core, inflict unspeakable

agonies upon his enemy. The peach tree, which is the bane of all Masques, will cure the fever of anyone who sleeps against its trunk, if for only a few hours ; as the patient recovers so will the tree die.

In some parts of the province a tree will be split in two—though with due care to avoid injuring either branch or root—and through the aperture a child suffering from rupture will be passed six or seven times in the same direction. The tree is then bound tightly with a strong cord, and if at the end of a stated period the two halves have completely and exactly joined, the child will recover. Similarly, at Signes and la Cadière (both in Var) children are passed beneath the reliquary of a saint to guard them against illness ; near Toulon they are placed in the niche of a statue of St Maur on his feast-day ; and at Ganagobie (Basses-Alpes) they are seated upon the altar of St Transi. But the strangest of these ceremonies is that of passing a child suffering from whooping-cough beneath the belly of an ass ; at Luc there used, some quarter of a century ago, to live an animal which enjoyed so great a curative reputation that it would be taken long distances to visit patients.

A custom prevailing over the whole of the province is that of sprinkling the last planted

vine-stock with red wine ; and in grafting, the shoot is moistened with saliva and the good offices of St Benoit invoked ; while to prevent foxes from stealing grapes the consecrated ashes of vine-stocks are scattered round the vineyards. The Blessed Virgin makes it part of her business to keep a watchful eye upon the welfare of the olives ; and St John the Baptist, whom tradition asserts to have been beheaded beneath a fig tree, has so influenced it that it is dangerous for any man to climb lest he fall, even as did the head of the Precursor, beneath its shade.

Gourds, it is said, must be planted on Easter Sunday (and must on no account be pointed at, or they will dry up) and camomile gathered on St John's Day. In order to make absolutely certain of finding mushrooms, wear your waistcoat inside out ; and it is worth remembering that a pod containing nine peas, if carried in the waistcoat pocket, is an infallible mascot.

Beans, too, are useful articles to have about the person ; for to throw a bean into an altar lamp at the moment of pronouncing a curse is to assure the success of one's evil intentions. A saying popular in the country-side declares that when beans flower fools flourish ; but beans ought always to be treated with respect lest a Masque come along—as one actually did at

Menton—and out of revenge for inhospitality turn all the beans in the stew-pot into squalling brats.

It is told at Ollioules that once upon a time men were incredibly wasteful of bread—and well they might be, for the corn in those days grew along the whole length of the stalk. But God came to hear of this wastefulness and, accompanied by the Archangel Gabriel, descended to earth to deal with the matter forthwith. In the first house He entered, which was a cottage by the side of a cornfield, He was horrified at seeing the good woman cleaning the top of the table with new white bread. In His anger He strode into the field and began stripping the corn-stalks of their golden grain.

He had almost completed this terrible task when Gabriel, seeing for the first time what was happening, cried out, “But leave a little for God’s poor!” And God was touched by the Archangel’s petition and spared just the ear as we know it to-day; but ever since then bread has been expensive and difficult to obtain.

Sometimes, indeed, no bread of any kind can be had for love or money; and then the poor folk call upon St Honorat, mindful of his miraculous help to the Arlésians. For it is told that there was once such a drought in the

district of Arles that no wheat would grow, and there was a famine. They therefore prayed to St Honorat to help them in their distress, and he ordered them to bind what little wheat they could find into one bundle, to thresh it and store it in a loft. In amazement—and perhaps in disappointment—they did so, for the bundle was very small and the loft very large; but even though they took from it enough every day to feed the whole town, the supply never grew less and the Arlésians were well nourished and contented throughout the famine.

In order to know whether two persons of one's acquaintance are to be married, take eight blades of corn and squeeze them in the palm of the hand in such a manner that the ends of the blades protrude. Then tie the ends two by two; and if on opening the palm two blades have stuck together so as to have the appearance of but one, the two sweethearts will enjoy an equally sure and happy union.

Every year on the 4th of December, which is St Barbe's Day, farmsteads throughout Provence plant a few grains of corn on a piece of flannel or in a saucer and keep it snugly inside the house. If the corn does not grow rapidly it betokens an approaching death; if, on the contrary, it is fully grown by Christmastide, it promises an

abundant harvest and good fortune to them that planted it.

Around Menton oats are used for indicating noon. If a head of oats is held between the thumb and forefinger and then spat upon, it will—so, at any rate, aver the Mentonnais—turn towards the south and (if it is actually midday) towards the sun.

§ 3

Near the old priory of Vaucluse is a rock resembling a woman, which is known as the *Femme de Bâ* ; and the saying runs that “ if the *Femme de Bâ* puts on her white dress at sunset the weather will be fine, but if her black dress, it will rain.” Rain is also predicted “ when Ventoux wears its hat and Maguelonne its cloak.”

Dearth of rain is indeed a problem in Provence during the summer—the more so, one imagines, since moles are said to sleep for six months of the year and to suck moisture from the ground for the remaining six—and it is not surprising that supernatural aid is sought where human agency is manifestly powerless. The rites performed upon the statues of St Pons and St Gens in order to procure rain have already been described ; but there are other Saints who are also credited with power as rain-makers. Among

them is St Eigous, or Aqueux, or Aygulf;¹ a statue to him is the object of pilgrimage at Notre-Dame-du-Brusq, at Châteauneuf, near Grasse; and it is said that the faithful never set out to invoke his aid without taking with them an umbrella. At Tourves, near Brignoles, St Probase had once the reputation of providing rain when it was needed; but in order to keep him up to the mark, his statue was taken from its usual resting-place in a cave reputed to have been his hermitage and shut up in the church until rain actually fell. Similarly, at le Bausset, near Toulon, the statue of St Eutrope was beaten periodically until he deigned to grant the wishes of his devotees. Even to dream of rain means good luck, and a rainy wedding-day signifies abundance. The rainbow goes by the beautiful name of the Silken Archway; and it is said that if its extremities touch a tree, the tree will die.

But if the Provençal is often anxious for rain, he has a great fear of storms—perhaps that is the reason why thunder enters as an expletive so largely into his conversation. Folk are still pointed at in the remoter districts as capable of provoking a storm in any village they choose; in other parts it is only necessary, in order to achieve the same end, to mow certain fields or

¹ Officially, an abbot of Lérins in the seventh century;

stir certain fountains. But, on the other hand, the local priest has often mysterious dominion over storm-clouds and can, if he will, cause them to pass without breaking ; the ringing of church bells will have much the same effect. If the storm breaks despite these precautions, it is wise to throw the hook, which usually hangs on the cottage hearth, outside the house and in the direction in which it is desired that the storm should pass, or to place a handful of salt on the back of an infant. The herb which is called *caramandrié* (*Teucreum Scorodonia*) is thought to render safe him who holds it during a storm ; but the greatest protection against lightning is to take shelter in a cottage upon which the sign of the Cross has been made with a holy candle at Candlemas, and in which a second holy candle, specially procured upon the same occasion, is burning.

CHAPTER SIX

Beasts and Birds

§ 1

ONCE upon a time Almighty God gave to Adam a cane of willow, with the injunction that every time it was usefully employed some useful thing would be created, but every time it was evilly employed some evil thing would appear. God also forbade Eve the least use of this cane ; and to use it, of course, was exactly what Eve wished to do more than anything else. Adam argued with her at length, but to no purpose ; so, to end the matter, he laid the stick heartily about her shoulders—and there leapt from it a beautiful and useful goat. After this, Adam hid the gift most carefully ; but Eve was not long in discovering its hiding-place and in experimenting with it—with the result that there appeared an enormous wolf which chased the goat. Then Adam arrived, hot and angry, and, seeing the state of affairs, laid the stick a second time about the shoulders of Eve. Thus was

created the dog which frightened the wolf and protected the goat.

The story continues in this fashion throughout most of the animal world ; there is no need for us to pursue it further, for it has already introduced to us some of the most familiar of four-footed Provençals. And of them all the goat holds pride of place ; though not because of the wealth of folk practices that have grown up up about it—the most interesting of which is the custom, until recently observed at Aix, of setting a goat to lead a funeral procession so that its plaintive bleat might attract the sympathetic attention of the Almighty in Paradise. The real importance of the goat in Provençal folklore lies in the tradition, common to the entire province, of the *Chèvre d'Or*.

Over all the country-side the *Chèvre d'Or* roams by day and by night, guarding the priceless treasures bequeathed to us by the ancient world—or, as some say, a treasure hidden by the Saracens. Usually he is invisible ; but sometimes his eyes and the golden crest of his horns may be seen after nightfall, especially on Christmas Eve and St John's Day ; and should he discover you disturbing even slightly those monuments and relics which are the pride of the country, he will butt you with no little violence, so that you will

be bewitched and follow him over hill and dale until he leads you to the edge of a precipice or the bank of a deep river; and then he will disappear, and woe betide you if you do not come very quickly out of your magic trance.

They tell at Bagnols, in Var, of a man who followed the Chèvre d'Or into the very heart of a mountain. Suddenly the ground fell from beneath his feet; he found himself in a vast cavern illuminated by a brilliant light; and in the centre shone a huge goat made of gold. Without the slightest warning the golden goat sprang upwards; up and up he travelled, growing dimmer and dimmer, until at last he disappeared behind the stars; and the astonished man, emerging from the spell the Chèvre d'Or had cast upon him, found himself lying cold and stiff on the mountain-side.

Sometimes, high up among the hills, one finds on rocks or in the dewy grass a hair of pure gold—it is one that has belonged to the Chèvre d'Or. The peasant who finds it treasures it in a little bag worn round his neck, and all goes well with him. When he dies it is buried with him, for it would prove the very worst of bad fortune should it be handed on to his sons; only the finder by accident may derive benefit from it.

A shepherds' proverb warns us against count-

ing goats lest the wolf eat them ; and another avers that the wolf eats only those goats that are counted on a Friday. But goats have natural and permanent protectors in dogs, which are God's animals, just as cats are the Devil's animals ; and to this day children are often discouraged from playing with cats. To see cats the first thing in the morning is a presage of bad luck for the day ; but that is as nothing to the vile luck which results from seeing them at midnight. Yet black cats are thought to bring happiness and fortune to the house in which they dwell ; and he who kills a cat or a dog will experience continuous reverses for at least seven years.

In Provence, as in almost all European countries, the evil connection supposed to exist between cats and witches makes the life of poor Puss anything but a bed of roses. In the Midi, long after it had died out elsewhere, there lingered the revolting custom of burning cats in the Midsummer Fires lit on St John's Day. Even at the present time, at Aix, the *Jeu du Chat* consists in tossing a cat into the air and catching it as it falls. Can one wonder at the number of neglected, mangy creatures to be seen in every corner of France, whose nine lives must too often be nine prolongations of misery ? They are

long-suffering witnesses to the vigorous survival of folk tradition in an enlightened country.

A striking contrast to the treatment meted out to the cat is provided by a Christmas ceremony still performed at les Baux. A lamb that has been separated from the flock almost from birth and has been carefully tended is led, amid great rejoicing and decoration, into the church during Midnight Mass and presented to the officiating priest, while the shepherds who have brought it tell in traditional verses of their journey to Bethlehem. Before the altar a wooden manger has been erected, and throughout Christmas the lamb is guarded by shepherds. Never is it killed for food; after the ceremony is at an end it is trained to lead the flock, and its wool is made into a special garment for the bishop of the diocese.

The killing of lamb for food recalls a Provençal tale (told of a Greek statue of Christ in the Eglise des Accoules at Marseilles) which explains why the Jews do not eat the flesh of the pig.

Once when Our Lord was in Provence, He sought shelter for the night at a farm inhabited by Jews.

"We will give you shelter," said the Jews, "if you can tell us what is in that trough at the other end of the room."

Now in the trough they had hidden one of their number, and from time to time the man groaned.

"It is plain what is in the trough," replied Jesus. "It is a pig."

Whereat the Jews laughed and were about to turn Our Lord away. But He went to the trough and beckoned to the Jews to look; and behold, the man had changed into a pig.

That is why the Jews do not eat pork: they are afraid of eating one of themselves.

But in spite of the qualms of the Jews, the Provençal has no hesitation about eating the flesh of the ox that has served him so well in the fields; and it is said at Marseilles that if an ox enters a butcher's shop alive, the butcher may draw from the event a promise of brisk trade and high profits. Cows are declared to kick their milkmaids if the milk is watered; and a horse will always retaliate upon its owner if he works it on a Sunday. But bad temper—especially irritability arising from the torment of flies—may be cured in both horses and mules by blessing them upon St Eloi's Day; while a handful of oats rubbed against a statue of the Saint and mixed with their food, or the practice only recently abandoned of promenading the animals in the sea at les-Saintes-Maries upon

St John's Day, will cure them of most of the diseases to which they are liable.

From la Ciotat comes a story of an ass, even more objectionable than the rest of its breed, which used to haunt the shore and offer its tail to be pulled by passers-by, whom it would then lead straightway over a cliff or into the sea. One day it succeeded in carrying on its back six small boys ; at first it walked soberly, but gradually its speed increased to a wild gallop. Suddenly the terrified youngsters saw themselves approaching a precipice. With wonderful presence of mind, the six of them crossed themselves at exactly the same moment ; their next sensation was of the ass bucking and of their bodies flying through the air together. But just as they landed safely on the grass and sat up—doubtless somewhat ruefully—to locate their positions actual and relative, the astonishing ass turned round and spoke.

“Lucky for you it was,” it said, “that you crossed yourselves ; for otherwise I should have carried you over the precipice, and then you would all have been mine.”

And with that it vanished.

Several of the smaller animals, useless or even harmful though they may be in other respects, are not without medicinal value to the wise

peasant. Toothache, for instance, may be cured at Marseilles by carrying a mole's foot in the pocket, and teething infants are wonderfully soothed by wearing a collar of moles' feet. In the district around Menton, badgers' fat is a sovran remedy for sprains and rheumatism, or, in the mountainous districts of the hinterland, the fat of the marmot. At Menton also an application of rat's skin will immediately cure a rat's bite; while a broth of rats' tails will make short work of whooping-cough and other childish ailments.

§ 2

The folklore of reptiles and insects is surprisingly meagre in Provence—on the *cigale* it is silent, and even the lizard does not appear to rouse it to great animation. At Marseilles it is said that the tail of a lizard, after it has been cut off, cries out the name of God; and that to touch a *taranto*—a perfectly harmless species—will bring instant death. In Vaucluse it is thought that to inhale the breath of a salamander will cause one to swell up and burst, and that a toad kills small birds by its breath.

Toads, however, are useful in other ways. In a case of serious illness, catch a toad and put it beneath the patient's bed in a box or tin covered

only by a leaf ; the disease will pass to the toad, which will die. A dead toad placed in the pocket may cure toothache, and a frogskin makes an efficient substitute for chloroform. But, on the other hand, a toad will poison by its touch—even, according to the folk of Menton, if it be stepped on with a heavy boot.

The greatest enemy of the toad is the snake—any sort of snake. When toad and snake meet they glare at each other with flames issuing from their eyes, and spit poisonous breath. The battle may continue for a long time ; but sooner or later the weaker one gives up the struggle and throws itself down the throat of the stronger.

A labourer of Tarascon who once attempted to kill an adder by hitting it with a stick was himself killed by the poison which ran up the stick and entered his blood. There is, in fact, only one safe way of killing a snake—to spit down its throat. And it is almost a duty to kill it, for a snake will perform all sorts of evil. It will suck the milk from a child by putting its head down the child's throat and beating his stomach with its tail. It may even enter the child completely ; in which case the only remedy is to hang the little one upside down over a bowl of warm milk. Yet snakes are not altogether vile. A viper's skin sewn inside the jacket of a conscript will

bring him good luck ; a snake's fat rubbed on the afflicted limb will cure rheumatism ; and in the Alpes-Maritimes it is thought that a brew of snake's skin will drive away a tendency to sleep-walking.

There is a story which tells how a flea, the pet of a certain king's daughter, began to swell to enormous size, and at last burst. The king's daughter thereupon made from it the covering for a coffer, and the king promised his daughter's hand to whoever should guess the material from which the covering was made.

Certainly the flea, from its ubiquity in the Midi, is in a position to give rise to many folk-stories. It is said in the Bouches-du-Rhône—possibly not without a substratum of truth—that fleas are born in churches ; but there is another, and not less naïve, account of their origin.

One day God and the Archangel Gabriel were walking along the roads of Provence when they came upon a woman who lay under the shade of a tree and yawned with every sign of boredom. God frowned.

“Boredom is the root of all evil,” said He ; and taking a handful of fleas from his pocket, He threw them over the languid figure.

“Here is something to distract your attention,” He called as He walked on.

After a while Gabriel looked back ; and what did he see but the woman, brisk and bright in her occupation of chasing the insects and beaming with delight every time she caught one. And therein the Archangel perceived yet another instance of the Great Wisdom of God.

It used to be said that every year the beetles of Provence assembled at Arles on St John's Day and there fought a battle royal to determine which was strongest among them. They are not good things, are beetles ; nor are gadflies, which are the souls of witches—unless, that is, they are red gadflies, which are harbingers of good luck. Bees rejoice in human souls. Butterflies are the heralds of welcome news, and spiders—whose webs are said to be the work of Our Lady's distaff—assure fortune to stables or to the person in whose clothes they may be found. Similarly, the ladybird is considered as of good omen ; it goes by the name of Our Lady's Little Cow, and at Arles Catherinetto ; and girls entice it into the crook of their forefinger and there require of it to point them the way to Heaven and the date of their marriage. On the first question it appears invariably silent ; for all that we are told is that if it flies towards a young man an early marriage is certain, while if it flies towards a church the girl who has put the question

is destined to take the veil. Yet it is not all insects who will have any truck whatever with churches. Flies, it is said, cannot live in a *cure's* house, and the folk of Menton are convinced that if a silkworm so much as overhears a blasphemy it will straightway curl up and die.

§ 3

One of the strangest sidelights upon the manner of thought of our ancestors is afforded by their judicial trials of animals, common till the end of the sixteenth century. In Provence, a few of these trials, the records of which have been discovered in village archives and almost forgotten documents, have attracted some recent attention ; but even at the risk of being charged with undue repetition, it is amusing to recapitulate them.

In 1565 the Arlésians prosecuted a plague of grasshoppers which had dared to devastate their lands ; indeed, between 1545 and 1596 there was a series of such prosecutions in Arles. The monks of Cimiez, near Nice, resorted to similar measures on one occasion ; but typical of these remarkable exhibitions of human folly—yet entirely reasonable when we bear in mind the medieval belief that animals are actuated by the same thought-processes and motives as human

beings—was one which occurred a little distance from Cimiez, at Contes.

In the spring of 1508 a great plague of caterpillars settled upon the fields surrounding Contes. Prayers and the blessings of the local priests and the lighting of bonfires all proved of no avail; and at last the peasants sent a deputation to the Authorities begging them to rid the fields of the pest, which threatened complete ruin to the crops. After a good deal of correspondence, the matter was taken up by no less a person than the Bishop of Nice; he forthwith summoned “the animals to appear to-day at the usual hour, after Vespers, at the Episcopal Palace, either in person or by proxy, as is customary in Courts of Law, to explain and declare for what reason (if they have any valid ones) they have committed this havoc, have thought fit to devour the said crops, and have not thought fit to leave the district of Contes nor to betake themselves into a desert place far from the works of man.”

A *procureur*, or defending counsel, was provided for the caterpillars; and he had little difficulty in showing that, owing to the shortness of the notice given them, it had been impossible for his clients to obey the Bishop's summons. Furthermore, he raised the question whether the plague should not be considered as God's judg-

ment upon the inhabitants of Contes for some misdeed of omission or commission—for having turned a deaf ear to the needy or for irreverence during Divine Service. Very eloquently and persuasively he pleaded throughout the entire summer, rebutting the arguments of the prosecutor with considerable subtlety and placing the learned judge on the horns of a pretty dilemma—for while the judge was obviously anxious to rid the country-side of a pest which threatened quickly to increase the cost of living, he could not, as an ardent theologian, but ask himself whether there might not be some truth in the allegation of spiritual shortcomings. He compromised at last by ordering the inhabitants of Contes to observe strict fasts during a whole month and to pay a sum of money into the treasury of the Bishop—a judgment which might possibly have been more severe had not the caterpillars chosen to ignore an offer of alternative accommodation in some fields near those they had invaded.

But fasts and payments achieved nothing ; and as a last resort the judge ordered a great procession, headed by all the local clergy and carrying the sacred relics of St Mary Magdalen, to visit the stricken fields and warn their obnoxious inhabitants that unless they removed themselves

within a stated period they would be visited by all the terrors of excommunication with bell, book and candle.

On the last Sunday of the year, therefore, the long procession moved out of Contes, singing hymns and reciting prayers. Slowly and anxiously it made its way to the ravaged fields, while the church bells rang with all their might and the singing and the praying rose like the sound of the sea and the hum of a million bees into the afternoon air. The fields were reached, and in silence the priest read the opening sentences of the dread warning. And then in joy and amazement he stopped, while the assembled throng sent up a great shout of gladness; for from every quarter of the hillside the caterpillars were seen advancing upon the people. Hurriedly the procession re-formed and led the way to the fields that had been set apart by the Contois for the caterpillars; and these, head to tail over a mile of road, followed in orderly array to their new home and there dispersed.¹

The last of these animal trials took place in

¹ Before this story is dismissed in its entirety as a piece of medieval exaggeration, the reader should study the larvæ of *Thaumetopeoidæ processionea* L. which march in column each behind a leader. A similar phenomenon has been observed in *T. pinivora* Tr.

France as astonishingly late as 1845 ; and even to-day a private ceremony is practised in Gard and the Bouches-du-Rhône called the Excommunication of the Caterpillars. When the larvæ invade a field in unwanted numbers, the owner fills a watering-can at a spring in a neighbouring commune and sprinkles the borders of his threatened land, repeating in a loud and solemn voice, “ Marauding caterpillars, betake yourselves from my plot of earth.”

§ 4

A belief, plainly derived from the Middle Ages, in the human nature of birds may be seen in the folktale wherein a practical joker of Arles once placed a crow’s egg in a stork’s nest. When the crow was hatched the poor bird was treated with the utmost contempt by the storks, for it was freely whispered among them that its mother had been guilty of adultery ; and at last their sense of respectability was so outraged that they stripped both mother and offspring of their feathers and hurled them to their death from the top of a high tower.

But birds excel human beings in one respect—in their power of foreseeing the future. Any bird singing at midnight, it is said, announces a death ; if an owl cries near a village a birth will

soon take place there ; and if it shrieks on the roof of a house in which the wife is expecting a child, it foretells the arrival of a baby girl. When a swallow builds beneath the eaves, there is general rejoicing at the good luck thus promised ; the neighbours are called in and toasts are drunk. But to laugh before a swallow's nest or to show one's teeth in its vicinity is to call upon one's home a plague of ants.

Doves and pigeons are both birds of good omen ; three pigeons on a roof ensure happiness to all in the house. Pigeons, too, are not without curative value ; one split in half, if placed on the forehead of the sufferer, will cure fever, according to a Mentonnais belief ; and a pigeon placed on the head of a dying person will attract to itself all the evil and leave only the good, so that he who is about to depart this life does so with the greatest possible chance of immediate translation to Paradise.

Magpies are lucky only in even numbers—*un pie tant pis ; deux pies tant mieux*. The raven is declared to be the soul of a bad priest and the rook of a bad nun. Until recent days the flight of the wren used to decide the fortunes of the village of Mazan, near Carpentras. A wren was captured alive by the whole village out a-hunting ; after Mass it was released by the *curé* in the

church. If it flew towards the high altar the happiest of auguries were drawn from the event ; if it settled on the statue of a saint things would go well ; but if it flew into the roof the year would be unlucky. The catcher of the bird was exempt from the payment of certain church dues for the year ; and if the catcher were a woman, she claimed the right to inflict what practical joke she chose upon the men who had taken part unsuccessfully in the hunt.¹

Of the domestic birds, it is said that a hen which crows like a cock presages the death of the master of the house, or a spell to be laid upon it by Masques, or discord, or that the mistress will become master. The hen is at once killed and its head nailed to the farm-yard door ; and a farmer who cannot distinguish which of his hens has crowed in this manner will sell them all rather than leave the culprit to go scot free.

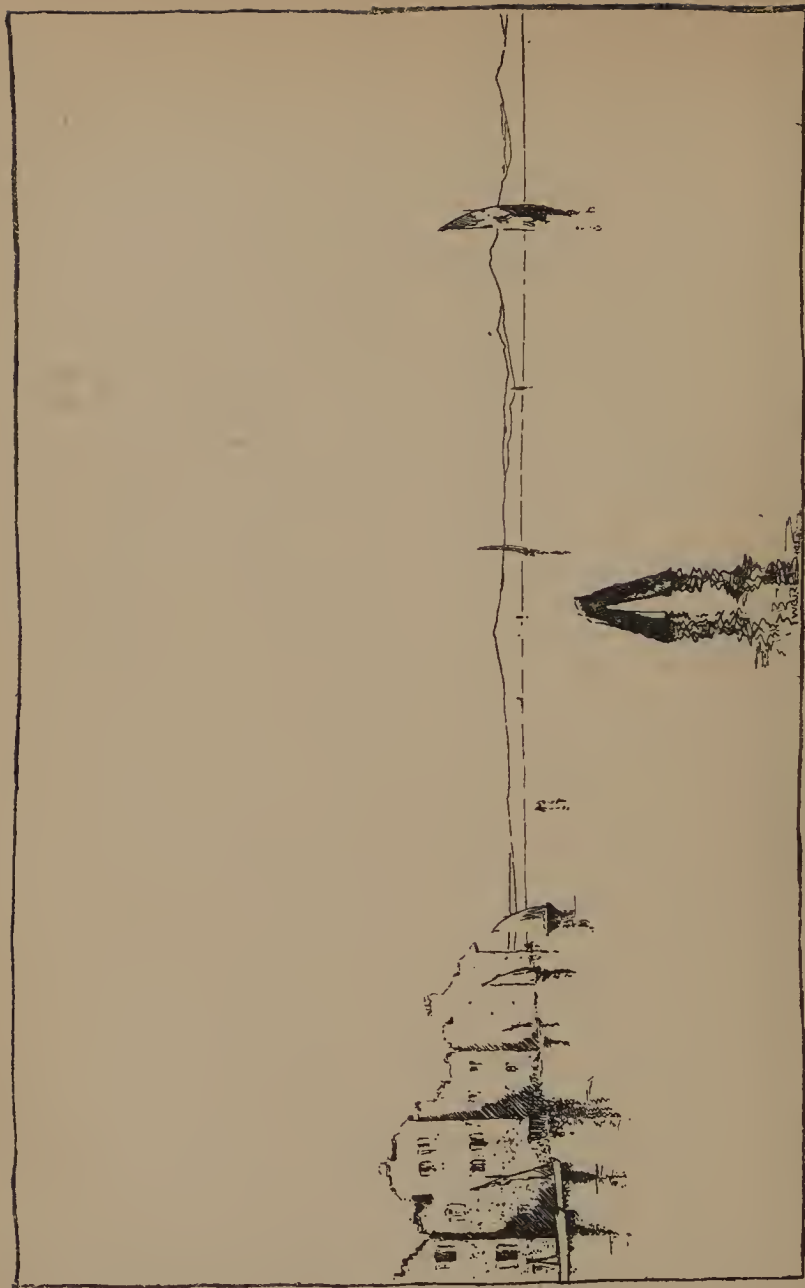
To obtain a good hatching do not put more than thirteen eggs—if that number must be exceeded, take care that the total is odd and not even. Eggs laid on a Good Friday will keep for several years at Marseilles, on Ascension Day at Menton. To injure an enemy, put a hair

¹ Up to the time of the Revolution an annual Feast of the Wren took place at la Ciotat, and there was a famous one at Carcassonne (Aude).

from his head in an egg ; as the egg goes bad so will he fall ill. To dream of broken eggs means bad luck ; of whole eggs good luck.

At St-Saturnin-d'Apt, in Vaucluse, a curious ceremony still takes place annually. At Easter the youngsters of the household seek out their grand-parents and are given each an egg with the words " Behold the sign of your manhood."

At Gorbio (Alpes-Maritimes) a century ago, and in other places too, a game used to be played in which a living cock was suspended from a pole head downwards. The player's eyes were then bandaged, and the game consisted in trying to decapitate the miserable cock with a sword.



Martigues and the Étang de Berre

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Sea and the Fruits Thereof

§ 1

THE fishermen of Martigues, called Martigots, are the butts of Provençal wit. It is told of them that once upon a time they sent a deputation to Parliament to lay before the President a certain grievance under which they laboured. The deputation was ushered into a waiting-room adjoining the *salle d'audience*. But so nervous were its members that, when the time came for them to enter the august presence, they did not know how to pass with proper show of dignity through the heavy tapestry that separated the two rooms. After a flurried consultation they decided to imitate the person who immediately preceded them. The person, however, happened to be a dog; and the Martigots made their entry on all fours! So astounded was the President, adds the tale, that he granted their request without more ado.

Perhaps because the Provençal does not seem

to take his fishing very seriously,¹ his fisher-folk lack a good deal of the rich accompaniment of legend and tradition which characterizes their fellows in those parts of France where the occupation is more strenuous and more vital to economic welfare. Compared, for instance, to the discomforts of Biscay or the dangers of the outer Atlantic, the risks of Mediterranean fishermen are comparatively small. Which is not to say that they are negligible ; but bad weather is the exception rather than the rule upon the sea which is the cradle of life. So that, instead of finding it inhabited by evil and terrifying spirits, the Provençal sailor imagines mermaids and sirens of no very great danger sunning themselves upon its rocks and sands ; though he prays God to be delivered from both them and the whale, he does so with his tongue more or less in his cheek. Vague memories of the Lord of the Waters, the white manes of whose horses can be seen on stormy days, linger about the villages near the coast ; and at sea sometimes you may meet the

¹ Not so, however, his sailors. A sea shanty recently discovered and published in France and probably of Provençal origin claims for a son of the Midi the honour of having been the man who shot Nelson at Trafalgar with a *mousqueton* handed to him by a Breton. And during the Middle Ages Provençal fleets were great fighters and traders throughout the Mediterranean.

Magou, a mischievous sprite who plays practical jokes with the rigging or who draws your nets to the bottom. In aspect he is, it must be admitted, displeasing in the extreme ; but he is as nothing to the Death's Head with flaming eyes and grinding teeth which fisher-folk have been known to bring up in the trawl when they were imprudent enough to fish on All Souls' Eve. And when the Death's Head speaks, it utters words which come near to driving them mad with terror.

It is believed in some places that when the Death's Head is brought to the surface wind always follows. A somewhat similar belief on the seaboard of the Alpes-Maritimes avers that when the fish called *charran* (one of the sea-perch genus) is captured, the boat should return to port immediately ; for if the fish is near the surface it can have come only to announce a gale. If a shark when caught does not resist, it is thought to presage a tempest ; if, on the other hand, it fights hard for its life, only a heavy wind will follow. And if the light called St Elmo's Fire—which is always the herald of a storm—appears to rest on top of the mast, the boat will be unharmed ; but if it seems to fall into the sea, the boat and all in it are doomed to perish.

There was once a sea captain, noted for his

parsimony, who, in the middle of a storm which threatened to sink his ship, cried out in terror :

“Holy Mother, save me and I will light for You a candle so big that You cannot fail to be satisfied.”

No sooner had he uttered the words than the storm subsided.

Arrived in port, the captain repaired to the nearest church to carry out his vow. Now, there was also on board the boat an apprentice anxious to know with what measure of generosity the promise would be kept. Secretly, therefore, he too went to the church and hid himself behind a statue of the Virgin and Child.

Presently the captain came along with a very small candle and, having lit it, cried loudly :

“There, Holy Mother, isn’t that a splendid one ? ”

And the boy, somewhat disguising his voice, replied :

“No. It’s far too small.”

The captain, his avaricious soul cut to the quick, brought another candle slightly larger.

“There, Holy Mother,” he cried, “isn’t that a splendid one ? ”

And the boy again replied :

“No. It’s far too small.”

The captain made several further efforts, each

time with a candle slightly larger ; but in the end, finding every attempt rejected, he grew beside himself with rage and shook his fist at the infant Jesus.

“ Keep your mouth shut, little brat,” he cried, “ it’s your mother I’m asking, not you.”

With the exception of the Mistral, not wind but sun is the ruling spirit of Provence. Nevertheless, the fisher-folk in the villages along the coast still believe, though without great precision, in spirits which dominate winds, provoke storms, and cause the wreck of any vessel against which they bear a grudge. These folk believe too that certain church bells make journeys through the air to Rome or to Bethlehem at appropriate seasons and may be glimpsed o’ nights on their rapid way ; but the tradition, once firmly maintained, that the Three Magi might be seen in the moonlight at Christmas journeying to the Holy Manger has passed into a joke, and the Magi are now commemorated only in the three stars of the belt of Orion. St John, say the Provençaux, made the Milky Way to show the route to Charlemagne when he was fighting the Saracens ; and the Great Bear is the Chariot of Souls. It used to be said in the district about Arles that when He had made the sun, God found Himself with a surplus of sun-stuff. He put it aside for a

long time ; and then one day He re-discovered it and made from it the moon. Thereto, in later days, a peasant was banished for gathering thorns on a Sunday—and folk declare that they can distinguish three persons in the face of the moon as well as the bundle of thorns.

The Mistral, which has been well called *le fléau de Provence*, is said to originate in the unusually heavy breathings of a giant who lives higher up the Rhône valley. Yet the peasants think not altogether ill of it, since it blows away the evil from the land—an opinion sadly in conflict with that of Arthur Young in 1789. “It may, for what I know,” he wrote, “be wholesome to French constitutions, but it is diabolical to mine. I found myself indifferent, as if I was going to be ill, a new and unusual sensation over my whole body. . . . It is more penetratingly dry than I had any conception of ; other winds stop the cutaneous perspiration ; but this piercing through the body seems, by its sensation, to desiccate all the interior humidity.”

It was in August when Young wrote ; had he visited Provence during the winter he would have known that the Mistral can be not merely dry but biting cold, so that donning one's thickest clothes and huddling round a fire is but an inadequate method of keeping warm.

SEA AND THE FRUITS THEREOF

And fire, according to a folk-story, is something to be especially grateful for, since it was won from an Archangel himself.

Once upon a time men possessed fire and warmed themselves at it and cooked by it and lit their pipes from its embers ; but the combined odours proved disagreeable to God and His Saints in Paradise. Yet what more seriously disturbed the inhabitants of the Celestial Home was the fact that men were irreverent, impious, given over to gluttony, debauchery and all manner of sin.

“I will deprive them of fire,” said God, “so that in their simpler life they may turn the more readily towards Me.”

And every spark of fire upon earth was extinguished. Men lived as the animals ; there was no more laughter nor song, no more light-heartedness, no more merrymaking, no more feasting, no more love. And God could not but be a little sorrowful, for He had not wished to punish men so heavily ; but sorrowful He remained until one day Gabriel came to Him with a request.

“Allow me, Lord,” he said, “to take to earth a few glowing embers and offer them for sale among men, their price being neither gold nor silver, but the promise of a devout and pious life.”

Very readily did God give His consent, and Gabriel made his way to the market-place of a certain village, where he sat with the glowing embers before him. The evening through he sat there; but though many would willingly have given him gold or silver for his precious wares none would pay the price he asked. At last, sorrowful and discouraged, he set off for Paradise to confess his failure to the Almighty.

But on the way he met a poor old widow who begged some fire from him as alms.

"Only at the price of your devotion to God," replied Gabriel.

"But just this little ember—it is so small," begged the widow, touching it with the end of her stick.

"Only at the price of your devotion to God," repeated Gabriel.

For a long time the widow begged and haggled; but in vain. Gabriel, safely back in Paradise, gave God a long account of his ill-success, and together they deplored the wickedness of man. But even as they looked disconsolately at each other, their nostrils were assailed by the succulent odour of cooked meats and the sweet pungency of tobacco smoke.

They peered down out of Paradise—and on earth below they saw fires in every quarter,

and in the fires oxen and sheep being roasted on spits, and poultry and game, and delicious stew boiling in the pot. And they saw men everywhere smoking pipes contentedly; and there was such a laughing and merrymaking and singing and loving that the very hymns always chanted in Paradise were drowned by the pandemonium of it.

And then the trick of the old beggar widow in touching the glowing ember with the end of her stick flashed into Gabriel's mind, and he was all for sending a flood that should put out the fires once more. But God chuckled mightily to Himself when He heard the story, and said that for all man's moral laxity and the inconvenience experienced by the Saints, the sound of man's happiness was preferable to the apathy he had shown when fire was denied him.

So man was allowed to keep his fire.

But to return to our fishermen.

The rule still holds in Provence that the first planks of a new vessel must not be laid on a Friday; and sometimes the wood intended for boat-building will be cut only by the light of a waning moon. Nor will a fisherman leave port on that day; while there as elsewhere, the very desire to wish him good luck in his fishing will automatically deprive him of it.

FOLKTALES OF PROVENCE

But once at sea, the fisherman will tell you that the sword fish helps the tunny fish to escape from the nets; that the torpedo or cramp fish is called *dormillouse* because it sends to sleep the limbs of anyone handling it; that the hermit crab is mad, so that if you touch your head with the hand that has caught one you will go mad also; and that the shell of the gastropod if applied to the eye will cure shortness of sight. He will tell you also that the *poisson de St Pierre* (John Dory) is so called because St Peter caught it in order to take from its belly a piece of money with which to pay Temple tribute—and if you doubt the tale, he will show you not only the marks of the Saint's fingers upon the fish's skin but, in addition, all the Instruments of the Passion.

A favourite story along the coast tells of a fisherman who caught a fish that could speak. In amazement he took it home to his wife. His wife was anxious to eat it at once, but the fisherman dissuaded her and hung it behind the door. After some time the fish again spoke, telling the fisherman to divide it into a certain number of pieces, giving one piece to the wife, another to the children, others to the animals about the house, and burying the rest in the garden. And after he had done so, behold, the wife left off

nagging, and the children grew up into marvellous beings successfully carrying through all sorts of adventures, and the animals throve and waxed fat and fetched wonderful prices at market, and the fertility of the garden was beyond description ; and to cut a long story short, the fisherman was made rich for the rest of his days and needed never again to go to sea.

But do not mention chickens to a seafaring man or you may cause offence by unwittingly reminding him of the sailor who stole some chickens from St-Mandrier, near Toulon, and escaped with them on board a ship that was about to set sail. But with the stolen goods on board, the anchor refused to come up or the ship to move ; and stock-still it remained in spite of a favourable breeze until the chickens were restored to their rightful owner. All this caused no little scandal in the district ; and ever since then an honest fisherman does not relish being reminded of it.

A quaint ceremony used to be held annually at St-Jean, near Villefranche (Alpes-Maritimes). When a certain point had been reached in the recital of the Mass, the priest seated himself upon a throne erected near the altar, holding in his arms a new-born infant. An old fisherman and a young fisherman then came forward, and

in a series of traditional verses in the *patois* of Nice sang their praises of the child. At the conclusion of the verses they left the church, returning in a few minutes with a procession of fisher-folk bearing nets, baskets of fish and the model of a boat. These things they laid at the feet of the child with great reverence ; and the priest, on the infant's behalf, bestowed his blessing upon boat, baskets and fish.

In some of the smaller coastal villages a spring rite is preserved—it is now dead at such places as Nice and Menton, where it was formerly popular—known as the Burning of the Boats. At Menton an old vessel was covered with pitch and joyfully burned upon the foreshore ; at Nice it was dragged round the town on wheels amid shouts and huzzas and burned on the public square. Seldom, moreover, is there a lack of old boats for this purpose ; for the fishers of France, all of them ex-Navy men, draw a Government pension provided they follow the sea for a requisite number of days each year. In practice, those of Provence at least seem to conform to the strict letter of the law and to spend the rest of their time at some more congenial and lucrative work on land, so that their boats quickly go to rack and ruin and on the death of the owner are fit only for breaking up.

§ 2

Along the whole coast from Marseilles to Nice persist stories of cities submerged by the sea. Sometimes these cities are said to date from Saracen, sometimes from Roman days ; more often they are attributed to no special epoch but are described merely as ancient. Yet old though they may be, the fisher-folk who sail above them declare that through the bright Mediterranean water can be seen the people of these cities going about their daily business in streets partially ruined indeed but lined with houses yet habitable, the roofs of which are sometimes transparent. Only the cathedral is it which, according to the stories, has remained untouched by decay.

Nor is it along the littoral only that stories of submerged cities may be found. The fate of Bras and of Besse, two villages near Brignoles, has been described in a previous chapter ; at Roquebrune the tale is told of a beggar who, after an inhospitable reception by the inhabitants, found at last shelter with a poor widow. During the night he knocked on the widow's door warning her that the town was about to be overwhelmed and that if she wished to be saved from the catastrophe she must fly with him. Un-

hesitatingly she did so ; and she and he were the only inhabitants of Roquebrune who were alive next morning.¹ A similar tale is told of Barrême, near Digne, with St Isarn in the place of the beggar ; and other towns that have suffered the same dreadful experience are Draix also near Digne, Muy (Var), and Vergons in the Basses-Alpes.

Conspicuous features of the coast-line are everywhere a favourite starting point for legends and folktales ; but the space at my disposal permits only a very few from among the many that have collected about the marvellous coasts of Provence. The almost invisible entrance to the steep and narrow bay of Port-Miou, near la Ciotat, is still a thing of fear to sailors ; and they tell of a fisherman (a stranger to the coast) who with his son formed the crew of a vessel tossed about by heavy seas and in urgent need of a haven. The boy at the tiller headed for Port-Miou ; but as they approached it the father, standing in the bows, imagined he saw not three lengths ahead a line of jagged rocks barring their entrance. In terror he shouted to the

¹ Roquebrune has had an eventful career. On an occasion, it is reported, the Devil caused it to slide from a hill-top to its present position ; and the scar left by its descent can be seen to-day.

but the boy held to his course. The father threw himself upon the lad, trying to wrench the tiller from his grasp ; fiercer grew the struggle as the boy, thinking his father insane, strained every muscle to retain control of the little craft ; but the man's strength at last overcame him. He fell strangled at his father's feet just as the vessel slid safely into the narrow, fjord-like bay.

At another cove along the same coast, the line of sharp rocks shutting off the open sea from a kind of lagoon is no piece of panic imagination but a hard reality ; and the story is told of an evil hermit living near-by whose overtures to a fisherman's wife, made during the absence of her husband at sea, were indignantly repulsed. The hermit therefore picked up a handful of sand and, throwing it into the open entrance of the harbour, muttered some mysterious words. Immediately the mouth of the harbour became choked with rocks ; and that night when the husband returned, his ship was wrecked within very sight of his home.

The highest point of the Bec de l'Aigle, the promontory which encloses the western portion of the Baie de la Ciotat, is called le Capucin. A priest of that Order once fell over the cliff ; and instead of being killed as he would assuredly have been had not he called upon his Saints

for help and protection, he found himself in a cave full of the most wonderful coral he had ever set eyes upon. In the distance a tiny ray of light showed the way out; and such was his probity that he emerged into the day empty-handed. But a little later, admiration of beautiful things overcame him; he found his way into the cave (the story does not suggest that he fell over the cliff a second time) and packed in huge sacks as much of the coral as he could break, intending not only to admire it but also to make himself rich for life. But when it was time to begin carrying the coral away he could no longer see the ray of light which led to the open air; nor could he find it however long he searched for it, so that in the end he was forced to remain in the cave until he starved to death in the midst of his riches.

At Nice behind the Castle is a cavern known as the Grotte des Sabatiers. In it the sea echoes incessantly; but it is said by the fisher-folk that the echo is caused by the ghosts of dead shoemakers perpetually at work upon the soles of chimney soles.

The theme of this last story—one which, with its variants, is found in several parts of Provence—is not far to seek.

A Provençal nobleman, acting at the instiga-

tion of an evil wife, caused his son to be thrown into the sea. In due course the wife died and the nobleman was overcome at last by remorse at his unnatural act, wandering distractedly along the shore looking for the corpse of his boy. One day he met a monk and told him of what was in his mind ; and the monk, taking an olive branch, struck the waters of the sea so that they parted and made a lane down which the two walked dry-foot to the Land of Under-the-Sea. For long did they travel, witnessing the most wondrous of sights ; and at last they came upon a cavern, and at the end of the cavern the father saw his son asleep upon a rock. Right joyfully he woke him and kissed him ; and the two of them journeyed back to Provence, where they lived happily together to the end of their days.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Festivals and Folksongs

§ I

NEVER does the Provençal forego an opportunity of enjoying himself ; pleasure, song and dance are in his blood. And so it comes about that you cannot travel in his country at any time of the year without sharing in his sense of gaiety and celebration. But because of it, the number of *trins*, *votes* and *roumévages* in town and country-side is so enormous that it is impossible to do more here than mention a few typical ones.

Of the fêtes which are derived from the season of their celebration, Christmas is by far the most important to us ; for Christmas, being a home feast, conserves its traditional character after more public festivals have been transmuted by time or altogether abandoned. On Christmas Eve all the relations and farm-workers gather in the house of the master and head of the family for *lou gros soupar*—which differs from the usual

English Christmas dinner in leaving the consumer awake and alert at the end of it. Cod, cauliflower, fruits, pastries and nougat form its main ingredients. True that a sense of peace reigns over the table and outstanding quarrels have been ceremonially patched up for the occasion (for to be at enmity with anyone at all would bring atrocious luck with the coming year)—it is a peace not of repletion but of the spirit. The best wines in the house have been drunk, though sparingly; new linen graces the table; the green shoots of St Barbe's corn raising their heads in the candle-light promise abundant harvest; in a corner of the room the *crèche*, decorated with loving care by the youngest member of the household and set like a toy stage with naïve and expressive earthenware dolls called *santons*,¹ remind the company that the occasion is holy rather than hedonist, a Christian feast rather than a pagan debauch.

But before the supper begins, the most important of all the Christmas domestic ceremonies has already taken place—the lighting of the Yule log, or *tréfoir*. The log must, according to tradi-

¹ Santons are made chiefly at Marseilles and are sold there at a Christmastide fair. They represent the traditional figures of the Shepherds, Bohemian, Miller and other actors in the holy drama as conceived by the peasant mind.

tion, have been cut from a fruit tree ; and he who dares to sit upon it before the ceremony will assuredly suffer from boils upon every spot that the log has touched. The benediction is performed by either the oldest or the youngest person present ; a glass of *vin cuit*, specially chosen from among the best the house possesses, is poured over the log and a short prayer is offered. The log is then thrown on the fire ; and when first it catches alight and bursts into flame all the household cross themselves and say, " Fire, fire, burn the Yule." The Yule, however, is not allowed to remain for very long upon the fire ; but it is replaced every evening until Twelfth Night, by when it must be all consumed ; and its ashes are saved (as also are those from the Midsummer Fires on St John's Day) as cure for toothache and chilblains, as safeguard against lightning, as preventative of blight and as specific to ensure the easy calving of the cows.

After the supper has been eaten the evening is spent in singing *Noëls* ; then all attend Midnight Mass. On Christmas Day the gathering often returns to its various homes ; but sometimes its younger members will visit a tavern or a barn in the neighbourhood where a Christmas Mystery Play—known as *lou presepi*, the crib—is presented. This they do in a spirit not so

much of reverence as of pure fun, for the solemnity of the play is very quickly broken down by the scepticism and grossness of the Provençal on holiday. Topical allusions, coarse jests and interludes of knock-about comedy abound; the scandals of the village or the *quartier* are freely aired and appreciated; the music, generally founded upon that of the Church, is shouted by players and audience alike to ribald words. It is well, in short, that the *presepi* is rendered in the Provençal dialect, since squeamish visitors will not then understand it.¹

At Christmastide also there was held until the middle of the seventeenth century an obvious relic of the Roman Saturnalia which went by the name of the Fête des Fous. This outburst of excess was especially dear to the Provençal; priests themselves seem to have taken part in it. At Fréjus, Arles and elsewhere a mock bishop was chosen to lead the riot and the blasphemies; and at Marseilles a procession wound its way about the town, composed of all the least reputable of the pagan deities. The licence taken by

¹ These Mystery Plays must not be confused with the Passion Plays held until very recently at Aix, Aubagne, Draguignan, Grasse and other towns, which were on a far more dignified scale and far more reverential in their treatment.

the common people with ecclesiastical ceremonies and property was indescribable. An attempt to restore the reputation of the Fête by re-naming it the Fête des Innocents and holding it upon Holy Innocents Day did not appeal to the Provençal, to whom a spade is a spade ; licence was licence, and with all the authority of tradition behind it was not merely justified but something very strenuously to maintain. Indeed, in 1558 the Bishop of Fréjus, who had set his face against the debauchery, was murdered for his pains.

Lent in olden days brought with it further disreputable celebrations. Both at Arles and at Beaucaire games were held which included naked races for girls ; the money for these games, which were not stopped until the sixteenth century, was defrayed from the municipal exchequer. At Grasse also, games known as Jouvines were held every Thursday in Lent, and were of such a character that they were at last abandoned under threat of excommunication of those taking part in them. But of the most famous Lenten celebration, the Carnival, there is little need to speak, since in such places as Nice, where it has been turned into a spectacle and a source of profit to the town, it can speak very loudly, and in these days very vulgarly, for itself. In essence it is, of course, traditional



A Street in Grasse.

enough ; but the country-side is the scene of its more pleasing manifestation. In many small towns of Provence it was until recently the custom for a man to dress up as a woman and to make a burlesque hunt for her husband, the Carnival, searching for him in all sorts of out-of-the-way and ridiculous places. The Caramantran of straw is still everywhere led in procession and, having undergone a mock trial, is burned or stoned and its remains thrown into the river. Even the villages indulge in a Battle of Flowers—to which, by the way, we find allusion in the earliest reference by the Greeks to the life of their settlers on the Riviera.

With Whitsuntide came King René's great procession—or rather, series of processions—at Aix, which, like those of Draguignan and elsewhere, have been revived in recent years. Pagan gods and goddesses, saints and devils, vices and virtues, symbolical figures patriotic and comic jostle one another in this triumph of royal showmanship ; and at appropriate intervals the procession halts in its course and performs at the street corner such short plays and interludes as are suitable to its various component parts. In the past, the clergy, the corporation and the great guilds all took their places in this apparently interminable cavalcade ; and in its ranks

too might be seen such temporarily appointed dignitaries as the Lord of Misrule, Twelfth Night King and Abbot of Youth.

The Abbots of Youth are heard of in many towns of Provence, notably at Aix, Forcalquier, Manosque and Sisteron. The Abbot, elected from among the younger members of the chief local families, was accorded special privileges during his year of office and, accompanied by his Prior, took part in all the municipal and religious events of his term. His was a position of importance and benefit to the town if he chose to use it well ; but sometimes, if the stories told in old documents are to be trusted, it degenerated into little more than an excuse for loose living on the part of the holder.

On May Day the familiar ceremonial of May Queen and Maypole is to be seen throughout the province ; and with the advent of summer every town and village seems to spring to life in fairs and jollities and merrymakings innumerable. Midsummer Fires light up the sky on St John's Night ; the Nativity, the Assumption and other religious festivals bring their secular rejoicings too little known to the traveller ; and finally, upon All Souls' Eve, when the year's work is done and the harvest garnered, each family holds a solemn reunion, an evening of

reminiscence from which the children are excluded, a wistful, perhaps anxious, peering into the future.

At Châteaurenard, near Avignon, a great fair used to be opened on All Saints' Day ; it was one of the three special feasts celebrated there annually. Of them, only that of St Eloi, in August, now survives. St Eloi is the Patron Saint of all agriculturists in the Midi, and it is the custom on his day to bless the animals of the neighbourhood. Horses, mules and donkeys are led in long processions to the church from all the country-side, gay with ribbons and tassels and polished hoofs, wreaths of flowers replacing the high-peaked Provençal collar about their necks, and their flanks resplendent with gold and silver stars glued to the skin.

In 1481 St François de Paule, on his way from Italy to Tours, passed through Bormes, in the Maures (Toulon and Marseilles having refused him admission), and found it stricken with plague. The plague he drove away, so that the town became once more clean and healthy ; hence the erection there of a chapel in his honour and the celebration of an annual commemoration on the 4th of May. All the children of Bormes who are under ten years of age bring coloured paper to the open space in front of the chapel,

piling it together into a huge bonfire which is lit by the priest and over which the youngsters jump. The next day sees almost continuous Masses ; but the evening is devoted to enjoyment, dancing, and the playing of quoits and bowls. The day should finish with a procession—but tradition is firm in the statement that by evening the weather has always become too wet for it to be held.

There are, of course, throughout Provence fêtes and jollifications galore to which are attached some legend or relic of a legend. Certainly the most astonishing of them was held until the middle of last century at Barjols, upon the 16th of January ; attempts have been made within the last few years to revive it in a modified form. That adaptation to modern sensitiveness was desirable will be immediately seen from the tradition upon which the original feast was founded, that when the relics of St Marcellin were being distributed Barjols received his intestines.

In the old days, then, the *curé* of Barjols invited as many ecclesiastics as possible to attend and thus make the event more impressive. On the eve of the feast, at the conclusion of Benediction, every one in the church, including the visiting clergy, danced for a few moments, holding hands. The next day, at a certain point

in the Mass, the whole congregation struck up an electrifying air to the effect that

We will have them, yes we will,
The little intestine of St Marcel,

and set itself to dance within the sacred precincts with ever increasing vehemence.

In the afternoon a procession headed by all the clergy visited certain points in the town, followed always by a solemn rabble chanting the amazing song and dancing at every street corner ; and it was thought that the longer the procession could be made to take upon its journey the richer the year's harvest and the luckier the year for human beings ; so that every device, ingenious, crude and comic, was employed to delay the clergy. But at last the procession reached its destination ; and then a bull which had been led in it was killed, its edible parts being either eaten communally at an open-air feast or shared between the homes of the town. The intestines, however, were thrown into the *place*, and round them the youth of Barjols danced and sang and dressed themselves in the most fantastic of costumes.

The two most popular pilgrimages of Provence—to la Sainte-Baume and to les-Saintes-Maries—have been already described ; there is a third, to

Notre-Dame-de-Bonne-Garde, on the extremity of Cap Cicié, near Toulon, which, if it is not now as frequented as it used to be, still retains in great part its hold upon the country folk. At one time the date for visiting it was the 1st of May ; but now the pilgrimage continues throughout the month and is popular with girls who wish to marry, for they accompany the young man to the chapel (a modern one), and if the statue of Our Lady (erroneously described as a Black Virgin) smiles upon their union they will marry within the year ; if not, they must remain single for seven years. Marriages blessed by Our Lady of Bonne Garde are invariably happy ; and sterile women also court Her smile, confident that they will be relieved of their sterility.

The pilgrimage has a curious origin. A shepherd was one day looking for a lost goat and was astonished to discover it at last in an attitude of prayer. It occurred to him to dig at the spot before which the goat had knelt ; and in due course he unearthed the statue that now passes for the Black Virgin.¹ When he announced his discovery, three villages—Six-Fours, Reynier and la Seyne—each claimed the

¹ A bull is said to have led to the discovery of the statue of Our Lady at le Thor, near Isle-sur-Sorgue.

right to house the statue in their church. Each in turn carried it off amid great pomp and ceremony; but each time it was found next day mysteriously returned to its hillside. The plainly expressed wish of Our Lady was then at last respected and a chapel was built above it; and the rumour of the occurrence having been noised far and near, pilgrims began straightway to flock to the shrine from every part of Provence.

A somewhat similar story is told of a Black Virgin at Barjols; it is recounted that once the statue was removed in favour of a brand-new white one, but so loud and long were its lamentations that it had at last to be replaced. Black Virgins are to be found at Aix, Marseilles (Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde), Notre-Dame-des-Anges, near Pignans (Var), and at Brignoles; that at les-Saintes-Maries is said popularly to represent not the Holy Virgin but St Sarah who, in her capacity as servant, must, of course, have been a negress! And tradition firmly maintains that the one in the Abbey of St Victor at Marseilles was carved by St Luke from a root of fennel in spite of the fact that it is of nut.

Other fairs and feasts depend not upon religion but upon trade. Foremost among them is that of Beaucaire, which for at least three centuries was one of the most famous in the world.

Established as long ago as the twelfth century, it brought every sort and condition of people to the town, and Beaucaire prided itself upon the fact that there was nothing which could not be bought in its streets ; and even in far later days it was still of European importance. “ The fair of Beaucaire,” wrote Arthur Young in 1789, “ fills the whole country with business and motion. . . . I was informed that there is hardly a nation in Europe or Asia that have not merchants at this great fair, chiefly for raw silk, of which many millions in value are sold in four days : all the other commodities of the world are to be found there. . . . Returning to Nismes, meet many merchants returning from the fair ; each with a child’s drum tied to their cloakbag : my own little girl was too much in my head not to love them for this mark of attention to their children—but why a drum ? Have they not had enough of the military in a kingdom, where they are excluded from all the honours, respect and emoluments that can flow from the sword ? ”

As a trade exchange of first consequence the Fair of Beaucaire has, of course, been entirely superseded by such great fairs as those of Lyons, Leipzig or Vienna. Yet it still continues—from the 21st to the 28th of July—and though its

glory is not that of the olden days, every *patois* and dialect of southern Europe may still be heard there during the crowded week in which Beaucaire awakens out of its dream to a furious, if restricted, cosmopolitanism.

On Lady Day the Fête des Congourdots, or Feast of Gourds, takes place at Cimiez, near Nice. Mass occupies the morning, and during Mass the gourds are blessed; but most of the day is spent in eating *pan bagnat*, bread into the making of which have gone eggs, anchovies and olive oil, and in exhibiting and buying painted and decorated gourds of all sizes from the stalls that cluster round the Abbey of St Pons.

The vineyards of Provence are now of little importance except as supplying local demand; yet a strange procession takes place each 1st of June at Boulbon, a little to the north of Tarascon. All the inhabitants of the country-side march from the village to the chapel of St Marcellin on a neighbouring hilltop. Every processioner carries in the crook of his arm an unopened bottle of wine which, when the chapel is reached, is blessed by the *cure*, who sprinkles it with holy water. Whereupon every one draws his cork and drinks—every one, that is, except the women, who invariably drink water.

Between la Ciotat and Toulon is la Cadière;

and here every springtime a bonfire is lighted and all the bays and inlets of the sea thoroughly explored as if in expectation of discovering an invader. The next day there is held a great procession to the hermitage of St Cyr, headed by two men carrying a basket of flowers, the different colours of the blooms symbolizing different virtues. The accompanying priest blesses the fields and the country-side; and on return, the flowers are deposited in the church porch and left there until they have withered away, their fallen petals being infallible love-bringers, so it is said, to any young man or woman who unwittingly eats them crushed in his food.

The habit of preparedness for invasion—a habit full of wisdom when the history of Provence is borne in mind—has given rise to a series of fêtes known as Bravades; that at St-Tropez is still an annual attraction, and others were held (some until only a few years ago) at Draguignan, Sisteron, Callas, Seillans, Aups, Castellane, Fréjus, Bormes and Vidauban. They seem in essence to resemble a test mobilization of local forces and the conveyance to a place of safety of such valuables as may readily be moved: the two theories of their origin—between the merits of which I have no means of effectively judging—declare them to be either pre-Saracen and aimed

at the Saracens, or themselves a Saracen religious rite designed to scare evil spirits from the district. But whatever may be the truth, they have in the course of centuries become overlaid with all sorts of later traditions and customs; and it is as mobilizations that they will appeal to the observant onlooker to-day.

At St-Tropez, for instance (where a fleet of twenty Spanish galleons was put to flight in 1637) a Captain of Bravade is chosen, and under him serve (theoretically at least) the able-bodied men of the town, their ancient swords and muskets—kept for the occasion in the Hôtel de Ville—receiving the benediction of the priest. For three days in May St-Tropez stands, as it were, to arms; there are processions, speeches, bonfires, music and frequent discharge of musketry and cannon. Guards are posted and the statue of the Patron Saint, after it has been carried with great ceremony round the town, is replaced in a different niche—possibly symbolizing its removal to a place of safety.

In other places in Provence rites are performed which, without being in any sense Bravades, nevertheless suggest the same underlying idea of secreting sacred statues from danger. Near Tourves is a chapel dedicated to St Jean and St Probace. On the 25th of August the village

takes St Probace from the chapel and deposits him for two months in the parish church, returning him at the end of that period to his former home. At Solliès-Pont the statue of St Catherine is taken on the first Sunday in May from the parish church to her hermitage near by. Until recently it was left there until the first Sunday in September ; now it is brought back on the same day. Similarly, the statue of Our Lady in the chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Paracol, above Val, near Brignoles, is taken from its resting-place on the Sunday before Nativity and deposited in the church at Val, where it is dressed in rich clothes. A week later it is stripped of them and returned to its hillside. And in the Alpes-Maritimes a certain statue of Our Lady spends the summer at la-Madone-de-Fenestre and the winter at St-Martin-Vésubie.

§ 2

In almost every Provençal fête or fair three attractions outweigh all others—the *joutes*, the bullfights and the dances.

The water tournaments called *joutes* are held wherever a river, lake or even a small stream offers a suitable site ; they are declared to date from Greek days and to be popular in modern times in certain parts of Greece. In the bows of two large

rowing boats a platform is built, known as *la tintèino*. On this platform stands a champion with *la targo*, a lance and buckler of wood ; and the competing boats row at each other with all their might, while the champions strive to thrust or tip each other into the water. A great deal of skill is required on the part both of the lancers and the oarsmen ; and the loser is greeted with derisive shouts which harmonize ill with the deliberation and solemnity with which the sport is conducted.

Nothing solemn, on the other hand, is connected with the bullfight as played in Provence. And “ played ” is indeed the correct word ; for any member of the audience may take part without great risk to himself—or to the bull. Into an arena, often composed merely of carts or barrels, the agile little animal from the Camargue is let loose with a cockade of coloured ribbon wired between its horns ; and the fun consists in snatching the cockade without being prodded. There is no cruelty or revolting spectacle in the *Courses Provençales* such as makes the *Corridas de Muerte*, imported from their native Spain into the arena of Nîmes and elsewhere, sickening to view. The enjoyment is innocent enough and seems, one can even imagine, to be shared by the bull ; it is strange that more tourists do not choose to see

for themselves what a Provençal village bullfight is like. Disgust at cruelty is one thing ; squeamishness and timidity and fear of first-hand experience are qualities much less admirable.

But when all is said and done, it is the dances of Provence that claim the first attention of the visitor ; and in and about every village he will see them in summer-time, headed, of course, by the *farandole*, melancholy or danced with diabolical abandon. Even more than other dances, it is in fact the spirit which pervades it ; and that, like life itself, is indescribable. The dancers range themselves in two lines, one facing the other, and thus caper and wind where they will through streets and fields and lanes. From time to time the chain stops and all dance a *ronde* ; and then it continues its serpentine progress, while the *galoubet*, the little pipe of Provence, sings its air to the accompaniment of a drum made of walnut wood and covered with dogskin. Or, if the space at the disposal of the dancers is restricted, the dance may become a thing of greater dignity, greater agility, greater skill ; more attention is paid to the heel-and-toe work in which the Provençal excels. Yet it is always wild freedom that he prefers—the freedom to dance where he pleases for as long as he has breath in his body.

A variation upon the *farandole* is the *rigaudan*, divided into two parts—the *vole* and the *rigaudan* proper. Two chains, one of men and the other of women, dance round the *place* or field in which the dance is held, sometimes together, sometimes each chain taking a different direction. But always at a given spot the chains meet ; and then every man takes the woman opposite him and dances with her to the end of the field and back, doing his best on the return journey to bump into other couples. Should some of the dancers fall, the sport is considered by so much the better ; and in order to add to the confusion it is legitimate and even praiseworthy to break into side-dances upon one's own account.

Occasionally also one may see sword-dances, such as were habitually performed at one time at Istres, on the Étang de Berre, or *boufets*, or *olivettes* ; but modern dances are gradually ousting the old, and only the *farandole* is able to maintain some remnant of its popularity. Yet the Provençal folk, whether it is the *farandole* or no, must always dance, for dancing is life to them ; at Cagnes in the seventeenth century they danced themselves to the edge of excommunication, while in almost every other town in the province they have quarrelled with their clergy not once but many times over the same glorious

mania. To-day even, it is customary throughout the country-side for mothers to put shoes on their children for the first time on Easter Sunday, and just as the bell rings at the Elevation to stand the little ones on the ground—supporting them, since of course they cannot yet walk—and make them take two or three leaps into the air, afterwards dedicating these first steps to the Blessed Virgin or to a popular Saint. At Roquebrussanne, mothers who have a child backward in walking take it to a certain altar in the church after High Mass and sing, “Jump with the left foot, jump with the right, Little Infant Jesus, jump with both feet,” while jigging their child up and down in the air. And at les Arcs, until recently, children who were present in the procession on the day of St Rosseline were compelled to perform a dance consecrated by tradition to that occasion only.

If Provence did not dance it would die.

§ 3

With equal truth might it be said that if Provence did not sing it would die. Everywhere the southern peasant takes spontaneously to song; in Provence he has the tradition and the inheritance of the Troubadours to strengthen his natural aptitude. Often the hot silence of

a country afternoon will be broken by the sound of voices singing in unison at their work in the fields ; and itinerary minstrels still make their occasional round of the towns, selling in roughly printed sheets the ballads, topical or traditional, sentimental or patriotic, which they compose and sing ; and although the great majority of these efforts are worthless, some will be found of haunting grace and a few of real beauty. There are ingenious souls who for a few francs will make you a song for any occasion, introducing whatever name you care to give them ; and, lest you should gather the impression that all singing in Provence is public, many a devout peasant croons to herself at her bedside an evening prayer to the Good Mother with a white rose in Her hand, who stands above her between seven angels, three at the foot and four at the head.

After the marching songs of the Roman legions, one of the most important sources of Provençal folk-music has been the Church. In the Middle Ages—and far beyond—an extraordinary licence was allowed to congregations in the chanting of responses ; and often in place of devotion the worthy priests were shamed by ribaldry and filth or, at best, by popular songs entirely at variance with the spirit and requirements of the

Sacred Office. For centuries the clergy inveighed against the singers, but in vain ; some musicians, accepting the situation, composed Masses in which sacred airs were inextricably mingled with folk ditties ; elsewhere the Latin was translated at intervals into *patois* in the hope of weaning the people from their pernicious preferences. It was only gradually and at the price of compromise that matters at last righted themselves ; and then it was seen that both the Church and folk-music had been gainers from the confusion : Church ritual had gained in humanity and folk-music in a dignity it has not even yet abandoned.

Each season in Provence brought with it—and brings with it still in the remote parts of the province—its appropriate song. Is it Carnival ?—harlequin shouts his satirical verses into the unappreciative ears of those for whom they are intended. Is it sheep-shearing time ?—a *ronde* describes how the shearers and the washers and the carders and the spinners and the weavers and the buyers come and go, and how finally the ragmen collect up the remnants. For dancing there is the famous *ronde*, telling of all those who themselves dance under the Bridge of Avignon—the gentlemen who bow, the girls who curtsy, the dames who ply the needle, the carpenters who

saw, the washerwomen who wash clothes, and a host of other folk. At the season of reaping the labourers sing a curious Reapers' Grace which, after narrating how to Adam and Eve is foretold the day of their death, breaks into a jovial expression of good-will towards the master and mistress of the house. The fishermen of Marseilles, lustily offering a reward of four hundred crowns to whoever rescues their mistress from the sea, sing of the much higher reward they are prepared to give should she be returned to them dead and cold. When the olive harvest comes, the workers sing of a lover and his lass who meet on every day of the week, she on her way to buy provisions, he advising her to go some other time because it is raining. At All Souls they sing of a sexton who stole the shroud of a corpse and of the fate that befell him. But it is at Christmas that they sing the sweetest songs, the *Noëls*, some composed and others put into their modern setting by Saboly, the "Troubadour of Bethlehem," who was born at Monteux, near Carpentras, during the seventeenth century, and whose music you may hear in any Provençal church.¹

¹ At the same period Puech and Nalis composed many charming *Noëls*; but their popularity has been overshadowed by that of Saboly.

FOLKTALES OF PROVENCE

Yet the most glorious songs of Provence, the songs by which she is made known over all the world, are her love songs ; for love is an evergreen, tender and tameless in this land of grey olive trees and red rocks and fierce sunshine. But love in Provence deserves a special chapter.



Vence.

CHAPTER NINE

Lovers and their Lyrics

§ I

THE story which carries us farthest back in the history of Provence is a love story. It tells how the first Greek settlers, after they had landed at Marseilles, sent an envoy of peace and good-will to Nann, who ruled over the district of Arles. Now it happened that on the day of the ambassador's arrival Nann gave a feast to the chiefs and warriors from among whom his daughter, Gyptis, was to choose a husband. Bearded and very strong were the chieftains of Arles, rough and uncouth in their ways, loud and coarse in the manner of their speech ; the young Greek made fair words and presented the gifts that he had brought with grace and courtesy. Gyptis followed him everywhere with her eyes, and throughout the feast she was silent and absent-minded ; yet when the moment came for her to offer the cup of espousal to him whom she chose for her mate she did not hesitate but

without timidity or shyness put it to the lips of the handsome stranger. Willingly he drank of its wine and thus were the two united, their love living still in the Greek beauty of the women of Arles.

But love of a woman may divide as well as unite; death alone eases all pain, closes all wounds, heals all enmities. An old Provençal legend tells of two brothers, impoverished scions of a noble house, who both loved with a fierce jealousy the same maiden. Very beautiful was she and gracious to her suitors; but she was as rich as they were poor. Each brother therefore, rather than be beholden to her wealth, determined to go out into the world so that he might make his fortune and claim her before his rival. And each went into the world and laboured; but one day in a lonely place they met, came to words and from words to blows.

That night a hermit who lived near at hand was awakened by a mysterious horseman.

"Hurry, father," cried the horseman, "hurry, I pray you. For my brother lies stricken to death upon the hillside and calls for a confessor."

The hermit hurried to the spot indicated by the horseman and there found a young man, his breast pierced by a sword, at death's door. Only just in time did the hermit confess him;

and as he stretched out the dead limbs and closed the dead eyes, he heard from the lips of his forgotten companion the words :

“ Father, confess me also, for I am in as great straits as my brother.”

And the hermit, looking up at the speaker, was horrified to see protruding from his breast the hilt of a dagger. Quickly he confessed him also ; and as the last words were still on their journey to God, the horseman fell dead upon the ground.

In the morning the hermit returned to bury the two enemies upon the hillside where they lay ; but what was his astonishment at finding them locked in each other's arms in so loving an embrace that human strength could not part them.

No one knows better than the hot-blooded Provençal that love is no placid progress ; but few peoples have had the courage to acknowledge as much in their popular fêtes. At Nice, however, the rough path of love is described in a series of Lenten *festins*. At the Festin des Reproches lovers fall out over real or imaginary grievances ; the next week, at the Festin de la Réconciliation, they compose their quarrels ; at the Festin des Promesses the wedding day should be determined upon ; and at the Festin des

Calignatori—roughly translated as “cuddlers”—the courtship is encouraged to ripen and all difficulties and disagreements smoothed away.

These *festins*, however, are obviously intended only for those who have declared their love; yet in Provence as elsewhere are timid souls to whom words are lacking, however propitious the moment. To their aid come customs which enable them to dispense with halting speech. As if in imitation of Gyptis, the girl who offered a young man a cup of wine, used by that act alone to signify her readiness to wed; if she handed him an ear of oats or placed a log upright in the fire so that it burned rapidly away, she was considered to have dismissed him. At the now deserted village of Six-Fours, near Toulon, girls who desired to engage themselves would make a cake called a *fougasse* and set it, together with wine, in a niche outside the house. When darkness had fallen, a suitor who wished to try his fortune would eat the cake, drink the wine, and leave in their place a token—a piece of silk, a tie or a buckle—which he had worn that day. On the following Sunday the girl, if she accepted him, herself wore the token; if she did not, the suitor might know that she was not for him.

As for the man, the mere fact of visiting a house in his best clothes is still, in some remote

districts, regarded as tantamount to a declaration ; in the Bouches-du-Rhône a more explicit avowal of love is to offer the girl a sprig of thyme. Nor will she misunderstand his intention if for thyme he substitutes pins, the degree of his ardour being expressed by the number of pins he offers. She, on her part, will accept as many as her affection dictates and return the rest.

At Beausset, near Toulon, and also at Menton, the man who would make a declaration sits upon the beach by the side of his choice and tosses pebbles into her apron. If she returns them she accepts his love ; but if she merely shakes them away he learns thereby that his suit is rejected.

Even if love should prove mutual and the pair admirably suited to each other, it is still the tradition—and a tradition which dies hard—that every obstacle should be placed in the way of the lovers by their parents. It thus happens that the number of elopements in Provence is high, though as three witnesses are always ready to prove that it is the girl who has carried off the man (to release him from a possible charge of rape), we need not regard them too seriously. But whether eloping or not, every bride and bridegroom will take the precaution of filling a pocket with millet seed or salt ; for Masques can cast no spells over the pair until all the seeds or

all the grains have been correctly counted, and the possession of millet or salt during the wedding ceremony ensures an abundant family.

The most interesting of wedding customs used to take place at the village of Fours, near Barcelonnette, and are still in part maintained. When setting out for the church the father of the girl must give her a glass of water at the bottom of which is a coin—suggesting, presumably, that he is no longer responsible for her upkeep. When the couple kneel at the altar the bride spreads out a corner of her dress so that the groom may kneel upon it.¹ After the ceremony is completed, the new wife is taken by her father to a certain stone on which she sits while all those who have been present in the church place a ring upon one or another finger of her left hand until every finger is covered with rings. Then the two families indulge in a mock fight—a fight which ends with a feast at the house of the bride's parents.

When the newly-married couple first approach their home, friends who have already occupied the house refuse them admittance on the ground

¹ In the Bouches-du-Rhône the bride crooks her ring finger as the bridegroom slips the ring on to it. The ring is thus prevented from falling past the second joint; and the woman will be mistress in her own house.

they await the new mistress. Whereupon one of the party accompanying the pair steps forward and explains that the new mistress is present. The doors are then thrown open for her to enter and she is presented with three small loaves, two of which she gives to those already in the house and the third to those who wait upon the threshold. As soon as this ceremony has been performed the husband and wife are expected to share a bowl of soup—each using the same spoon and taking alternate mouthfuls.

Newly-married couples at Toulon share on the first evening of their marriage a cup of water from a fountain surmounted by a statue said traditionally to be that of Samson. This they do that they may be blessed with many children; while to achieve the same end at Brignoles—where the Countesses of Provence used always to spend the later days of their pregnancy—they kiss the navel of a statue enclosed in a vault over a spring, purporting to represent a certain St Sumian.

On the main road from Marseilles to Toulon, between Beausset and Ollioules, is the chapel of Ste-Anne-du-Brûlat, built, according to legend, by a poor peasant to whom the Holy Virgin appeared in a vision. To him She gave Her girdle with the injunction—so runs the story—to

raffle it and with the money to build a chapel to St Anne. The girdle is said to be still in the neighbourhood, though nobody can tell you where; but only half a century ago it was occasionally worn by a woman in order to secure for herself an easy confinement.

A strange belief is still maintained in the Bouches-du-Rhône—that the elder of two twins is always the second to be born.

§ 2

While despised commoners during the Middle Ages kept alight in their lives and conduct the flame of true love, there existed among their betters a substitute passion, a science of sentiment, the chief merit of which lay in the songs to which it gave rise. Those songs were the lyrics of the Troubadours.

Yet later generations have so travestied the courtly singers of Provence that it is well to remind ourselves that behind their phrase-making and poetical posturing, their swashbuckling and languishing and extravagant exploits lay an outlook and a philosophy compounded of religion, chivalry and courtly graces which did serve as an active ideal in an age when human life was cheap and a woman's honour of not so high account as it is to-day. Through all womankind the edu-

cated Medieval glimpsed some vision, some dim irradiation of the Holy Virgin ; She it was who suffused Her beauty in the countenance and person of Her earthly sisters. Chivalry, at first merely the duty owed by a subordinate knight to his superior—the duty of supplying a quota of men and a term of personal service in the fighting of his battles—gradually spread protecting wings over the ladies ; although, as women in Provence could possess lands and castles in their own right and were thus able to maintain a trifle of independence, chivalrous regard was, no doubt, not always entirely selfless. Ever increasing refinement of life among the aristocratic and leisured classes left space between bouts of warfare for love and dalliance.

In the medieval castle, the Lady was practically the only woman with whom a horde of men of all conditions would come into contact. Although she might rule over lands and territories far or near and be acknowledged by countless knights and vassals as their overlord, to her husband—for all her independence—she ranked little higher than a housekeeper or a horse, save only as the mother of his heir. Probably she had been married while still in her teens as the result of a mercenary compromise between her parents and the parents of her husband ; love

had not entered into the contract, nor had she emerged from childhood until it was too late for any man to claim her. Wherefore the homage and etherialized love offered to her by men of her own choice was accepted as the privilege not of the young girl but of the matron. The matron it was who became the theme of poems and the patroness of poets—poets drawn from all ranks of society; from the bakehouse like Bernard de Ventadour or from the royal palace like King René or Richard Cœur de Lion; poets of supreme genius, such as Petrarch, the last and greatest of the Provençal Troubadours, or pedestrian followers of the Muse whose work survives only to be forgotten.

A code of love existed between these poets and their mistresses, a code devised, according to some authorities, by Courts of Love whose decisions are amazing to the modern mind. No love was conceived as possible between a wife and her husband; a husband might take a second lady to test the temper of the first; a divorced man might become the lover of his late wife, but only after she had taken to herself a second husband. Yet such edicts as these do not necessarily prove a systematized laxity of conduct; and though in Provence no love can be wholly platonic, much of the love of the Troubadours

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was doubtless as innocent and as abstract as one could wish. And if it were not, have we great right, six hundred years later, to cast the first stone?

Several circumstances would seem to suggest the professionalized nature of such love-making and love-taking. It was apparently open to any retainer who could turn an ingenious verse and employ a pen well filled with adulation, wit or satire to approach with them the Lady of the castle; the acceptance or rejection of his advances rested with her good pleasure. Four degrees of love, compact within themselves, were acknowledged: hesitancy, suppliance, acceptance and friendship. Each degree had its appropriate and regulated conduct; once a lover had reached the stage of friendship he was accorded a single kiss from his mistress and, in return for upkeep and occasional gifts, was expected to sing the praises of her person, character and intellect, not openly—lest perchance the matter should come to such a pass that her husband's patience was taxed beyond endurance—yet in such a manner that her identity should remain in little doubt among them who had eyes to see and ears to hear. But did the lady's generosity fail to fulfil expectations, or did the songs of the admirer fall flat to mistress or to public, the state of friendship could without

great ado be terminated, leaving the Troubadour at liberty to find a new subject for his Muse and the lady a new lover to increase her self-esteem and social position.

It happened sometimes that the singer had never seen the lady of his songs. Geoffrey Rudel, it is told, had not set eyes upon the Countess of Tripoli, in whose honour he had poured forth the verse of years ; and when at last he determined to visit Syria, he fell mortally sick during the voyage and landed at Tripoli a dying man. To him came in secret the Countess, careful not to reveal who she was ; but by the description of her beauty which others had given him and on which he had fed his love, Geoffrey recognized her and, with a sigh of happiness at the fulfilment of his desire, expired in her arms. The same charming story is, however, told of another singer, Andrea de France ; and indeed almost every tale that one can narrate of the adventures and exploits of the Troubadours verges on the legendary rather than upon the strictly historical, with such strength and power has their memory seized upon the imagination of the people.

One more circumstance may often have induced a man to embrace the profession of Troubadour. This was simply the custom throughout medieval

Provence of dividing up an estate, upon the death of the father, equally among his sons ; so that after a few generations there would survive a family of position and education, the majority of whose members were to all intents and purposes landless and therefore poor. The younger and poorer among them would be compelled by their poverty to enter the service of a rich and powerful noble ; and in his service they might well perceive and take advantage of an opportunity to advancement through praise of his wife. For if the Troubadour enhanced the lady's fame, so, by reflection, might she enhance his to this extent at least, that the higher her rank and position the more readily would her Champion in verse gain the ear of the world.

The lot of the Troubadour, however, was not always cast in pleasant places ; after gaining his mistress he had to keep her, or, having lost her, to find another. A young nobleman of Cadenet, on the banks of the Durance, near Pertuis, saw his parents slaughtered and his home destroyed while he was yet a child. Brought up and educated by a kindly knight, he abandoned his benefactor and, since it was almost the only course open to him, travelled under an assumed name as a Troubadour. In due course he fell in love with a certain Margu  rite de Reis, but

she would have none of him ; and he would have been sorrowful had he not been accepted by the Marchioness of Montferrat, who took him to her castle and provided him both with the necessaries and some of the luxuries of existence. There, however, he continued to sing the praises of Marguérite ; and the Marchioness, not being a paragon of all the virtues, turned him angrily away. Returning to Provence he fell in love with Blancasetta, sister of one of his earlier patrons ; but evil tongues wagged and he was forced to leave the lady. At Aix he met and loved a nun not yet professed, named Agnes of Marseilles ; but being again rejected and despised, he entered the Templars of St Gilles and finally went to his death in Palestine.

Other Troubadours besides Cadenet ended their lives in the shelter of the Church. Folquet, a merchant of Marseilles, seems to have occupied his leisure in penning verses to Azalais, the Viscountess of that city. In later life, however, he determined to abandon his verse-making and his business and to take holy orders ; he joined the Cistercian abbey of le Thoronet, between Draguignan and Brignoles, became its Abbot and later rose to the Bishopric of Toulouse ; and it is said of him that once, hearing one of his love songs sung in Paris, he imposed upon

himself such a penance that it came near to ending his life.

Azalais de Marseille was a famous beauty of her time, whom others, in addition to Folquet, celebrated in their work. Pierre Vidal was of their number ; but when he stole a kiss as she lay asleep, her indignation drove him from the shelter of her castle. Consoled for his loss, Pierre accompanied Richard Cœur de Lion to the Holy Land, married a Greek woman in Cypress, assumed royal state there, and embarked upon the raising of a fleet in order to substantiate a claim, purely imaginary, to Constantinople. Then follows a gap in our knowledge of his acts and fancies ; he suddenly re-appears established in the good graces of Louve de Peinaultier, who dwelt near Carcassonne ; and in order to demonstrate beyond doubt the love unto death which he bore the She-wolf he dressed himself—so at least runs the tale—in a wolf's skin and allowed himself to be hunted by dogs until his mangled and half-dead body was brought back to the house of his mistress.

How she received him after this exploit must be left to conjecture ; that she was possibly moved by such devotion, or at least not insensible to it, may be inferred from the fact that he remained—according to the story, with his

tongue cut out by her irate husband—in her service until he ended his career in Hungary or Lombardy. She did not, it seems, treat him with the brutality exhibited by the mistress of Guillaume de Balaun, who refused to repair a quarrel in which she considered herself the aggrieved party, until her lover had torn out his finger-nails and served them up to her on a salver together with a poem in praise of her beauty.

The Greek wife of Pierre Vidal was not unwilling, it would appear, to be abandoned—at least, she gave him no later trouble. Not so, however, the wife of Gaspard de Puycibaut, who, during his absence, led too gay a life at Arles, in revenge maybe for his neglect of her. Stories of her conduct reached his ears; he returned, and, in order to test them, disguised himself and entered her room. Next morning he made himself known in all his wrath; his wife he shut up in a convent and, forsaking his profession, himself entered a monastery where he became famous for his prayers in rhyme.

But to recount the story of even a tithe of the Troubadours who lived and loved in Provence, the cradle of their art, would require far more space than is possible in this little book; those that I have already sketched must be regarded

as typical of them all. But one more story insists upon the telling. It is of Guillaume de Cabestang,¹ who loved Bérengère des Baux, a middle-aged dame capable of retaining him only by means of a love philtre which, declares the tale, distorted his face into a permanent grin. Fortunately he was able to procure an antidote ; he left his determined charmer for Tricline, wife of Raymond de Roussillon, who treated her with as much consideration as he would a piece of furniture.

After a while rumours began to float about the district that the love of Tricline and Cabestang was not as innocent as one would like to imagine Troubadour love ; and these rumours came to the ears of Raymond. Cabestang, however, swore it was not Tricline but her sister Agnes, wife of Robert de Tarascon, who was the object of his passion ; and Raymond, thoroughly deceived, promised all his aid in the winning of so desirable a mistress. Soon afterwards Raymond, Tricline and Cabestang went on a visit to Robert de Tarascon, a visit which Raymond promised himself should see the climax of his amorous diplomacy ; there Cabestang and Agnes (who had been warned of the deception that was being

¹ Born at Chabestan (Hautes-Alpes) where he came from a family of impoverished nobles.

practised on her brother-in-law) played their parts so well and with such fire that the jealousy of Tricline herself was aroused, and it was only by means of an ardent poem that Cabestang could convince her of his faithfulness. But in the excess of her reaction Tricline allowed the poem to fall into the hands of her husband ; he, knowing the truth at last and beside himself with rage, determined upon the death of the guilty pair. Returning post-haste to his home but still hiding his revenge in his breast, he slew Cabestang while out hunting, cut off his head, tore out his heart, and, taking it to his cook, ordered the heart to be prepared for dinner.

Now Tricline was inordinately fond of venison ; and to torture her a little before putting an end to her was part of Raymond's plan. He set the dish upon the table and smiled darkly at the relish with which she ate it.

"Do you know, wife," he asked as she finished the last mouthful, "what it is that you have been so enjoying?"

"I neither know nor care," replied she. "But it was delicious."

Then taking Cabestang's head from the place in which he had hidden it, he threw it before her.

"It seems that you love him dead," he exclaimed, "as greatly as you loved him living."

Tricline fell into a swoon ; having recovered and finding herself alone, she fled to the top of the castle tower and thence threw herself into the river beneath, to join in death her young and ardent Troubadour lover.

For some two hundred years the Troubadours flourished, devoting their talents and their energies not only to love but also to complaints upon the death of patrons, to religious and philosophical verses, to satirical and sometimes scurrilous raids upon each other's work and reputation, and, in later days, to attacks upon their masters and even upon Holy Church itself. Not unnaturally, both Rome and the princes of this world defended themselves as best they might against the rhymsters ; for their assaults upon the Papacy Ricard de Noves was thrown into a well (a punishment usually reserved for monks unfaithful to their vows) and Boniface de Castellane was beheaded. Bertrand d'Alamon, for his poetical thrusts at Charles II of Naples, Count of Provence, was deprived of a right enjoyed by him and by his ancestors in the passage of salt over the Bridge of Pertuis—a deprivation which at one blow brought him face to face with direst poverty. But he was astute enough to make further poems which were full of adulation of the man he had formerly reviled ;

whereupon the right was restored to him and he was taken into the service of Charles' son Robert, who raised him to the office of Seneschal of Provence and custodian of the royal privileges in the market at Rognes (Bouches-du-Rhône).

Virulence of expression against princes and Popes was not, however, merely individual and sporadic. In the twelfth century there arose throughout the south of France a heresy, most pernicious to orthodox Catholicism—and, indeed, it is said, to the very decencies of life—which attracted to it not merely large numbers of poor men but also a certain proportion of the Provençal nobility and its singers. Now among the incidental errors for which these Albigeois heretics were responsible was the translation of part of the Bible into the vernacular ; and the narrowness of outlook and indifference to true Christianity into which medieval Catholicism as a whole had sunk became immediately apparent. “Rome,” cried one indignant Troubadour, “God confound thee ! Thou draggest all who trust in thee into the bottomless pit.” And another, “Ah, false and wicked clergy, traitors, liars, thieves and miscreants, gold is your balance and your pardon must be sought with silver !”

No Church could allow such words as these to pass unchallenged ; Rome instituted a Crusade,

a reign of terror in which the ex-Troubadour Folquet of Marseilles played a conspicuous and significant part, and finally established in the Midi the dreaded Inquisition. The Albigeois heresy was extinguished ; but with it was extinguished also much that was gracious and enlightened in the courtly life of Provence. Poverty and dread of free speech overwhelmed nobles and singers ; a few Troubadours remained to practise their arts no longer upon the great ladies of this world but upon Our Lady in Heaven ; the majority fled to Italy and Spain where they continued to serenade the wives of Counts, Barons, Knights and lesser fry as in the good old days.

Almost the last voice raised in Provence in which we may plainly detect the Troubadour influence is that of the cleric Petrarch, the exile from Arezzo. Throughout his life he sang with all the fire and beauty of genius his love for Laura, the fair maiden of whose life nothing is known that does not overstep the borders of legend. And countless legends have grown up—of her humble birth ; of her first meeting with the poet in the Church of St Clair at Avignon ; of her marriage to a member of the de Noves or the de Sade family ; of her as the mother of eleven children ; of her death from plague on the twenty-first anniversary of their meeting ; of the

poet's vision in Italy on the very night she died and before he knew of his tragic loss. Yet since all things are possible to them that love beauty, Vacluse, where Petrarch lived and dreamed, has become a shrine at which Love itself may be worshipped in the persons of the poet and his mistress, in which the unsoiled devotion of a lifetime—unsoiled even though Petrarch himself was not without sin and debasement—may be held up to eyes misted over by the petty faithlessness of daily life and blind to the spark of divinity that is within every man and woman. Common-place realists may sneer at Petrarch's human frailties or cavil at the aloofness, whether due to her married state or to an invincible chastity, of Laura; the realist who is himself sincere must acknowledge the supreme struggle which every soul is compelled to endure with the Angel of Love, the greatness even of its defeat, the splendour of its refusal to compromise; he must acknowledge also the deathless grip in which the story of such a struggle holds the human heart, yearning always for love and affection. These things having been acknowledged are all that matter.

Roughly contemporary with Petrarch, Dante in Italy rendered immortal his Beatrice; but thereafter Troubadour influence waned and died.

Yet certain English words in common use to-day we owe to the Provençal language which the Troubadour lyrics made familiar over all cultured Europe: cullander (Prov. colador) is of them, and noose, funnel, league, rack, puncheon and spigot. And in our own time such Provençal poets as Roumanille, Aubanel, Jasmin, and, above all, Mistral have raised it from the *patois* into which it had sunk to a literary power.

§ 3

Once upon a time there dwelt in the Castle of Beaucaire a fair youth Aucassin, only son of Count Garin, and Nicolette, a captive maid from a far land. The sweet story of their thwarted love, of their perils and adventures in the countries of this world and in the world of faëry, and of their final union may be read in many a volume; for few medieval tales have gained so wide and just a popularity. Its authorship, save that it declares itself to be the work of an old prisoner in his hours of solitude, is unknown; it has been argued to be by some strolling minstrel to whom Beaucaire, Provence even, was unfamiliar; but from whatever spirit it may have sprung, it comes to us to-day like the perfume of a tender flower out of the past. For the contriver of the tale has contented himself with

a simple story of the love which changes not with the centuries. In the midst of much that is conventional both in matter and in style, there shines a lambent flame of sentiment and humour, of compassion for youth and pity for the follies of youth, sometimes a touch of self-mockery at his middle-aged indifference to life's fever. Always he retains his kindly sympathy for the lovers, and a quiet stirring of the pulse is discernible in those battle pieces where violent action recalls his own past. With a smile, doubtless, he describes the astonishment of the simple shepherds in their meeting with Nicolette, and with a delighted chuckle the humours of the fairyland of Torelore.

Whoever be the author, and wherever the tale have been recounted, we have in the story of Aucassin and Nicolette a picture, contrasting strangely and refreshingly with those of the Troubadours, of medieval love in Provence. Other tales that are narrated or sung by the people tell it also. The Princesse Lointaine smiled at one lover, pressed with her foot the foot of a second, touched with her hand the hand of a third; whereat the three disputed hotly as to which was the most honoured amongst them. A Countess whose lord rode back wounded and defeated from battle repudi-

ated him scornfully, saying that no lord of hers should ever be known to flee ; and he returned to the bloody field, gathered his surviving friends about him, and out of defeat snatched victory over the Infidel. Pierre de Provence, after loving the Princess Maguelonne of Naples, to whom he gave three precious rings, saw them stolen by a raven and recovered them only after long years of peril during which the faithful Maguelonne awaited him at Aigues-Mortes. Fluranço was carried off by the Saracens while her husband was at the wars ; he followed her, gained admittance to the palace of her captor and succeeded in rescuing her. The mother of Guillaume de Beauvoire ill-treated his wife during his absence, setting her to fetch water, knead bread and tend the swine ; on his return Guillaume recognized her through the shabby clothes such tasks imposed on her, took her once more to his bosom and walled the harsh mother between two walls of his castle.

These and innumerable other tales that have been preserved, either as folk stories or as ballads, picture Provençal love in all its tenderness and cruelty. There is in addition a modern story, an idyll and an epic of great charm and beauty, which shows it unchanged by time, as noble and as broad, as unyielding and as narrow as in olden days. That story is Mistral's poem of *Miréio*.

The farm of the Lotus Flower houses Maître Ramon, the old father bound to a tradition of patriarchal authority,¹ his gentle wife and his daughter Miréio, gracious in person and in mind, an idealization of all that is fair and lovely in Provence. We see her at her woman's work ; we see her with her suitors ; we see her at country rites and at popular fairs. We read of her love, thwarted, hampered, but for ever unswerving ; of her flight from the farm in search of Vincent, her lover ; and finally, before the shrine of the Marys at les-Saintes-Maries, of her passing to the Beyond, of her step, in the poet's phrase, on to the Boat of Souls, and her faring across the lovely plain of the sea that is the path to Paradise.

And so we leave Provence where we entered it, upon the desolate shores of the Camargue, where the light of Christianity first illumined the land and where the shrines which are sheltered by the fortress-like church contain not merely the relics of the Marys but with them the hearts of the people.

¹ Until recent years it was the custom for the head of the household to keep a *Livre de Raison* in which all events of family importance were noted. These books used often to figure in trials and civil actions.

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A-M = Alpes-Maritimes ; B-A = Basses-Alpes ; B-d-R = Bouches-du-Rhône ; G = Gard ; H-A = Hautes-Alpes ; V = Var ; Vau = Vaucluse.

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